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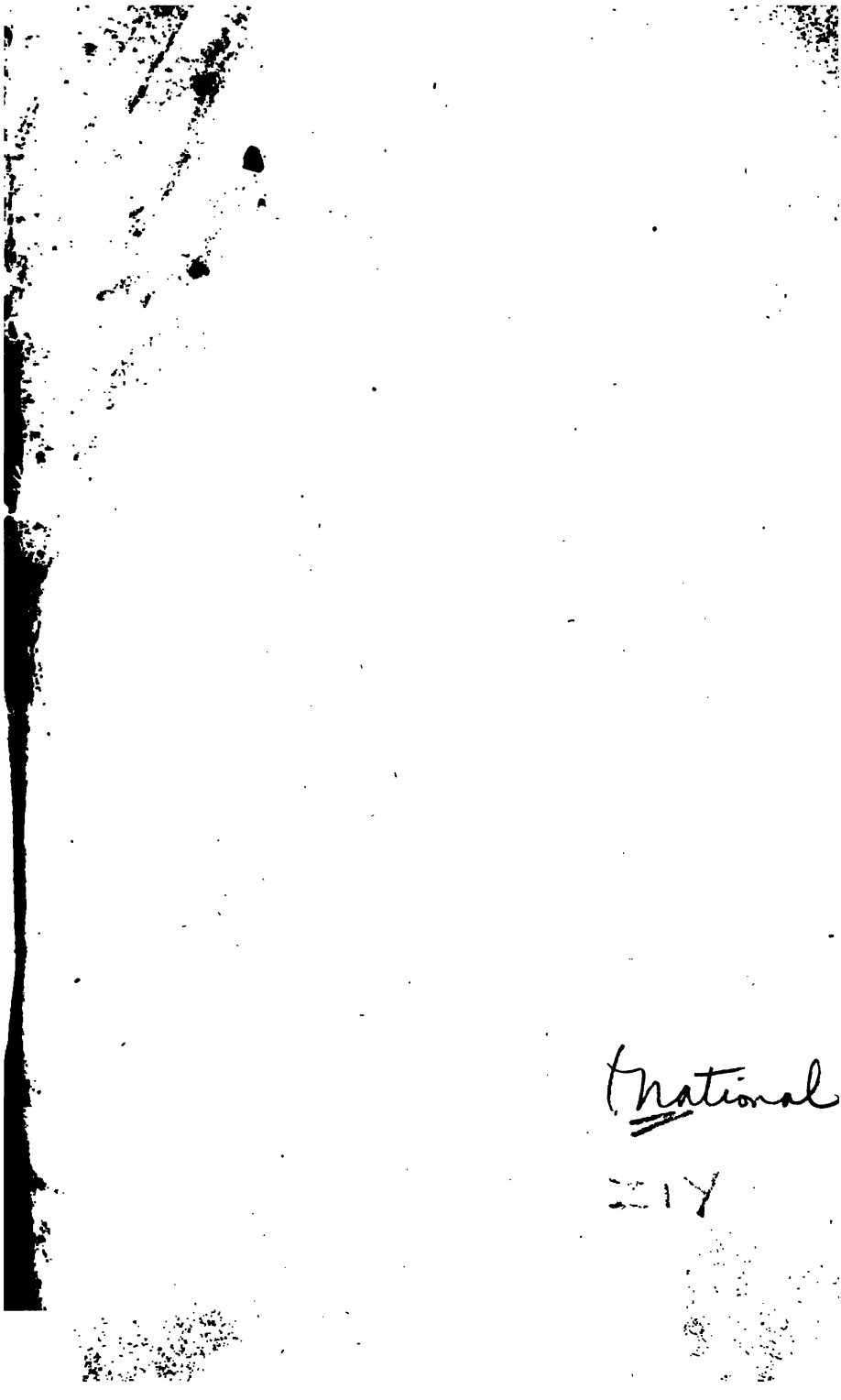
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THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR

ORIGINAL MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY

REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON.

NEW-YORK.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.—ISA. LII. 7.

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SERMON CXXV.

BY ALBERT BARNES,

PHILADELPHIA.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

Matt. v. 14, 15, 16. *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

This passage of Scripture implies that there is a difference between Christians and other men. It is a radical and permanent distinction as regards their principles of action. My object is to show that this difference *will manifest itself in the life.* This I shall endeavor to do by showing,

I. That this difference *will be* developed; and

II. By inquiring what there is in the circumstances of the Christian adapted to *bring out* his principles.

The first point is that the principles of Christian piety will be *in fact* developed in the life. By this I mean, that he who is truly a Christian in his heart, will be in his life; that his conduct will be not merely that of a professor, or a moral man, or an amiable and estimable member of his family and the community; but that he will be a *religious man;* that you may know *where to find him* on any subject pertaining to the kingdom of Christ. Now that this will be the case, it does not require many words to prove. For

1. *The nature of the change is such that it cannot but develop itself.* Regeneration effects no direct revolution in the *intellect,* but it does in the heart; none in the essential stamina of the mind, but it does in the principles of action, and in the volitions, desires, and preferences of the man. Nor is it a slight change. It is so great as to make it proper to apply to it the terms new creation, new birth, and life from the dead. There is no other change in the human mind like it—none so deep, so thorough, so abiding. This is so clear in the Bible as to need no further proof. Now the proper place to manifest such a change is in the life, and such a change if it exist *will be* manifest there. Neither the nature of mind nor of religion, will, or can, prevent it. Important revolutions in a man's principles on any subject we expect will be exhibited there. Nor have we any evidence that they have occurred until we witness them in a man's deportment.

But the change in a man's religious views and feelings in regeneration, is one that affects him not in any one department of life, but in all. It is not a revo-

lution whose effects we expect simply in the church, or in the family; in the external conduct, or in the abandonment of vices; but in all the appropriate circumstances of the man's life. If a revolution like that exist, it will be seen. It will constitute him a new man in Christ Jesus.

2. The same thing is clear *from the declaration of the text.* It is not, ye *ought* to be the light of the world, but ye *are;* not that Christians *should be* like a city set on a hill, but an affirmation that *they are* such. Though exhortations are addressed to Christians in the New Testament urging them to a life of faith, yet they are also addressed as actually putting forth the principles of piety, and as true to their God and Savior. Ye who were some time darkness *are light* in the Lord. Believing, *ye rejoice* with joy unspeakable and full of glory, *receiving* the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul. I thank my God, says Paul to the Romans, that your faith *is spoken of* throughout the whole world. None of us *liveth* to himself, and none *dieth* to himself. It is unnecessary to multiply passages. All know that the New Testament abounds in expressions declaring the matter *of fact* that the gospel *has* an ascendency in the minds of its friends. Nor would it be necessary to advert to this circumstance were it not that so many Christians are in the habit of regarding the Bible rather as filled with *exhortations* and *commands*, which they are not *expected* to comply with, than with sober statements of what the gospel actually does accomplish among men. The truth is, God contemplated that the gospel *should* have effect; and such *was*, in sober verity, the early effect of the gospel, that Paul could address *any church* as actually manifesting the mighty change wrought by the spirit of God. Ye *are* our epistle, said he to the church at Corinth, the living, standing proof at once of the power of the gospel, and of the effect of his ministry. *We* have fallen on different times. The language addressed to churches is not, ye *are*, but ye *ought* to be, the consistent followers of the Lord Jesus. O when shall we be free from that miserable theology which only chills, and paralyzes, and freezes; that false philosophy which fetters the soul, and binds the energies of the children of God; and that spirit of slumber which compels the ministry, if they would speak the truth to their people, to say, ye *ought* to be the devoted followers of Christ, and which seals our mouth when we *would* say, ye *are* living monuments of the power and grace of God.

Let not refuge be attempted here in the plea that the people whom Paul addressed *had been* heathen, and that therefore the change would be more manifest, and this sort of appeal would be more proper. True, they had been heathen; and the change was a proof which no infidel has met *yet*, that the gospel was from God. But the ground of the address to the primitive Christians was not what they *had been*, so much as what they *then were.* Besides, is it reserved for us to meet a remark like this, that a people nursed in heathenism, but yesterday degraded to the level of the brute, and sunk in every species of abomination, were to be addressed as actually *in advance* in Christian principles of the people of *our* times, and trained from their earliest years in the great principles of the Christian religion? Are we to expect more living demonstrations of the power of piety from the recovered population of Athens, Corinth, and Rome, than from the people of these times; more of its ceaseless energy and heavenly influence on the population of Caffraria, and the Sandwich Islands, and Burmah or Hindoostan, than in the churches of this land? No, my Christian brethren, the gospel contemplates it as a matter of *sober fact* that we can appeal to you and to all Christians and say, ye *are*—not ye *ought* to be—the light of the world. We can address the language of obligation and of duty to the most degraded population on the globe; we can approach the profligate, and the profane, and *the pagan, with the language*, ye *ought* to be humble followers of God. We *can approach true Christians* with the language of certainty, and say, ye are the

salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world. Nor is any man a Christian who cannot be addressed in that language.

3. The same thing is clear if we look at *the instances which are mentioned in the New Testament.* In the case of Christ it is beyond the possibility of doubt. Nor is it unfair to adduce him as a case in which the principles of religion were developed. True, he had no unholy propensity, and needed no change. But his principles were put to the test—and to a test unequalled in the life of man. On one occasion such was the *pressure* of circumstances, such his intense anxiety, and such the magnitude of the great inquiry, that he said, Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour—this impending calamity—this terrific, sad, and painful death? Shall I abandon this work; yield in the conflict; and pray to God to save me from approaching woes? His own decision is well known. Father, glorify thy name. Let calamity come; let me suffer; let me die; but honor thou thy name. Scarcely less clear was the case of the apostles. Who could doubt what were the principles of Paul? And yet Paul at conversion *might* have pleaded what would be pleaded by thousands of professors as the reason why their religious principles are obscured. It was not that he had no prospect of honor and ease and affluence that he became so decided a Christian. The path to fame and wealth was open before him. O how much persecution, and poverty, and contempt, and danger, might he have avoided by a little of that regard to ease and affluence which thousands bearing the same honored name of Christian manifest! How easy for him also to have sunk the Christian in securing the honors of office, the friendship and applause of mankind. But Paul judged differently. So of Peter, of John, of Moses, of Daniel, of Ezra, of Elijah, of John the Baptist. See Abraham, leaving the land of his fathers at the command of God; see Moses despising the splendors of royalty; see Daniel encompassed with danger and death; see the martyrs, witnesses for God while the flame encompassed the body, or their sinews were torn by the rack; see the Son of God, always the friend of his Father, always showing what he was; and you have an illustration of what the Christian principle is, and is intended to be.

4. *There is no principle in the universe that can be brought to bear on the mind with such weight as the religion of the gospel.* There is nothing that *can develop* the principles of man if it be not the gospel. And yet we know it is easy by far inferior tests to find out a man's character. Horace Walpole long since remarked, that every man has his price. A man whose predominant passion is avarice can be corrupted. A small sum may not do it, but you may multiply the temptation till his principles shall come out. Thus, it was not a trifling bribe that could move Lord Bacon. But he *might* be bought, and it was done. One form of pleasure or one degree of vice may not corrupt a man, but another will. So the natural principles of the heart may be brought out. Your father languishes on a bed of death. His dying sufferings will recall you from the place of folly or business to minister to his wants; or in other words, the principles of filial affection will overcome those which are leading you to vice.—Your country bleeds. It will test your patriotism. Its great sufferings may overcome the love of the fireside, and you may welcome the toils of the camp, and the perils of the field. The sufferings of your country have *brought you out*, and shown what you are. But none of these motives test the character like the religion of Christ. God, by that plan, designed to effect what no other plan could do. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be manifested in us. Law, philosophy, morals, *had failed to restrain* and reform men. But the gospel has been effect-

ual. In millions of cases men have been changed, redeemed, purified, saved. So that it has become an established matter in God's government that the gospel *is* powerful enough to overcome all the tendencies of sin. It will unclench the hands of the stoutest avarice; silence the profaneness of the boldest blasphemer; make pure the most corrupt heart; and stay the strides of the most haughty. There is not a grasp on gold, or pleasure which the gospel has not the power to break. And there is not a sinner who, if he fairly comes under its dominion, will not become a holy man. Your strongest propensities it may subdue. Your proudest systems of morality it may destroy; and your most gigantic schemes of corruption it may demolish in the dust—for thousands of such sinners as you are it *has* humbled, prostrated, changed into holy men. Nor persecutor is secure that he can accomplish his scheme before he shall be arrested by it. The band sent to arrest the Savior were awed, humbled, convinced by his eloquence, and returned, saying, Never man spake like this man. Paul was arrested in his mad career, despite his malice, and his commission. Now can it be that this mighty gospel that is appalled by no towering crime; that cowers before no propensities; that fears no titles, no splendor, and no renown; that prostrates haughty man as easily as does the tempest the proudest oak or cedar of Lebanon; that can enter any circle of corruption, and shed the peace of Eden around the habitation of the profane, and the scoffer, and the drunkard; that carries its principles into the profoundest minds, and sheds its humility into the proudest hearts, is it possible that it can exist, and not be manifest? Can it do all this, and no one know it? Can it live and act thus, and never be developed? Then may the light rest on the mountain top and the vale, and no one see it. Then may the city lift its turrets to the clouds, and be invisible. Then may the winds of heaven prostrate the pride of the forest, or the habitations of men, and no one know it; and then may the ocean swell, and pour its surges on the shore, and no one be aware of commotion. It must, it will stand out in the view of man. If it accomplishes such changes, they will be seen, and if it ever grasps any human spirit, it *must* show its power in the life. We are prepared to remark,

II. *That the world is fitted to develop the principles of men, and eminently those of the Christian.*

The plan of God in his moral government is to test the character; nor are any rewards conferred until the character is ascertained. The whole arrangement of his moral government is such as to show what man is, and such as to make the sentence of the day of judgment *be seen* to be just. Men are suffered to become learned, to see whether they are disposed to employ their learning for the welfare of the universe. They are suffered to accumulate wealth, that the native propensities of the heart may be brought out. Objects of fame, of ambition, of pleasure pass before the mind. It is not that God may *know*, but that a fair trial may be made. *Before* that trial shall be made, a sentence of condemnation would *appear* to be unequal. *When* man has been fairly tried, when virtue and vice, heaven and hell, honor and dishonor have been fairly brought before him, it is right that God should address him, and say to him, Bear that character with you to eternity.

Again. The organization of the world is adapted to develop the character of the hypocrite. Were true religion less decisive and less powerful, it would be more difficult to determine on the character. But religion is designed to produce a thorough change in all the man. It becomes then a matter comparatively easy to determine the character of those whom the Savior describes as neither cold nor hot—those that have a standing among the professed people of God, and yet *in works deny him.* In a world like this, and in a community organized as the Christian church is, man never need mistake his own character. It is not the

fault of God if men are deceived. So decisive is the gospel that it must, and will, produce the effect of testing the man. He that is not with me, said the Savior, is against me. Look at any instance of a hypocrite in the church, and there *will* occur occasions when his character shall be fully tried, and when it shall be seen whether he is willing to surrender the world for the sake of the gospel. Judas must find an occasion to manifest his avarice, and sunder the slender and feeble bond by which he was united professedly to the Savior. It was done, and he fell. He *had his price;* and such was the paramount ascendency of the love of gold in his heart, that for thirty pieces of silver—a price at which religion has been often sold—he was willing the Lord of glory should die. Achan must find an occasion in which his prevailing principle should be tested. The occasion arrived, and for a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment, he exposed the camp of Israel to the vengeance of God. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the same principle was again to be developed—and their lives paid the forfeit of the accursed love of gold in the church.

It is not this withering passion alone that will be tested by the gospel. It is adapted to try the hypocrite in all his subterfuges, in all his mental reservations; in all his evasions to escape the simple and decided duties of Christian piety. Every demand of truth or duty brings his character *out*. The doctrines of the gospel disturb or disgust him. Those solemn and awful, and yet tender truths, which go beyond the coldest moral sentiments, and which speak of the just government of God, of sovereignty, of election, of hell, of holiness, and prayer, trouble him. Those expressions of pure and advanced piety which speak of the higher joys of the Christian, and tell of communion with God, disquiet him. Those sentiments which speak of active piety, which call on him for decided zeal in the cause of God, irritate him. Those assaults which religion makes on his corrupt feelings, those reproofs which she administers when he conforms to the world, those denunciations which thunder along his path when he lives *just like other men*, and is ashamed of the religion which he professes to love, provoke him. His mind is ruffled by the demands of a life of sincere and prayerful piety. And hence Job asks, respecting the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon God?" The movements of piety enrage him. Efforts made to advance the religion of Christ find no response in his bosom, and meet only sour, cold, and repulsive feeling. A revival of religion is a phenomenon in which he has no interest—which is neither the object of his solicitude nor prayer. The great movements of Christian benevolence excite no kindred emotion in his soul. Efforts or wealth in that cause are deemed by him a *dead loss*. He has no tears to shed over suffering and sinful man. Now every time the gospel is offered to such a man in any of its forms, it tests the character. As if God would not suffer him to go to hell without knowing what he is; as if he would meet him at every corner; test him in all the departments of his soul; and throw himself in the way of the sinful and wretched man; he has varied the tests of the man's character, so that he cannot *but* know what manner of spirit he is of. By searching and uncompromising doctrines; by truths repulsive to the native heart; by demands on his piety and his prayers occurring every hour, in his family, in his professional life, in his intercourse with man, in the great designs of Christian benevolence, he meets the man everywhere, and gives him an opportunity to determine whether he will serve God or mammon. One thing is clear. Whoever goes down to wo murmuring at the justice of God, or complaining that there was no opportunity to test the character, it will not be the man deceived in a Christian church. Whatever the pagan, or the Jew, or the Mussulman may do, it is clear, that no man goes from the bosom of the church of God to the judgment of condemnation without having his character fairly brought out, and fully seen in the eye of the universe. *When year after year passes* by, and the man still retains his place

at the communion table, and *will* not be a Christian; and when having gone through ten thousand trials where he had an opportunity to show that he was a pious man and did not, no blame will be by him attached to God if he dies thus, and his home be made with other hypocrites and unbelievers; and the wonder is, that in these circumstances man *will* retain such a place in the church of God, and subject himself to all the goadings of a guilty conscience, and the irritations of truth, and the corrosions of remorse, and the consciousness of inconsistency for the poor and paltry benefits that result from professed adhesion to the people of God. The hypocrite will go to eternity thoroughly tested; and as God manifestly intends that his condemnation shall be monumental and admonitory with a disastrous pre-eminence, even in hell, so he has taken care that the case shall be fairly brought out, and that the wretched man shall have full opportunity to escape the terrific pangs of the second death.

Again. The organization of the world is such as to bring out the character of the sincere Christian, and one grand point of God's moral government was so to shape the economy of human things as to open the finest field for its display. Religion starts into life principles of action that are ultimately to have the ascendency in the soul. It calls up dormant powers—awakes new energies—urges to conflict with the powers of darkness—and bids man grapple with invisible and most mighty foes. Let any Christian contemplate for one moment the situation in which he is placed, and then let him ask, whether this organization does not contemplate the fact that his piety will be developed. What is religion? It contemplates the subjugation of his native propensities; the overcoming of his evil passions; the purification of a corrupt heart; the discipline of a vain, and wayward, and rebellious mind. It demands that chastened and serious feeling should take the place of frivolity; prayer, that of thoughtlessness; the love of God, that of the love of fashion; and delight in the scenes of devotion, the place of delight in the scenes of amusement and vanity. Can these exist, and not be manifest? And is it not the very nature of godliness that it should stamp itself in the life in letters indelible and legible by all men?

See the condition of the church of God. What *may* be in better times—in those brighter periods of the world to which human affairs, under the gospel, are tending—we know not; but hitherto, and even now, there is just enough of opposition among men to all that is pure, and meek, and humble to make it indispensable that there be a line distinctly drawn between the friends and the foes of God. Christians have been a little band—a remnant amid the tribes of men. They, spiritually alive, move among the dead. They tread a world in possession of the enemies of God. They are the healthy among the sick—the sane among the insane—the sober among the gay—the pure among the dissolute—the living among the tombs. Their very presence is a rebuke on human pursuits; their views a reprobation of the opinions of others; their lives a living remembrancer of the folly and crimes of men. Now there is not a single principle of your religion, that is peculiar to it, which the men of the world do not at heart *hate;* and in relation to which they will not manifest their hatred in appropriate times and ways. In proof of this I need only refer you to your own native feelings respecting the piety of the gospel. I *could* point you to the opposition to the *same* principles in the life and death of your great Master and Redeemer. And I could point you to a thousand fires of persecution lighted up in the darkness of past generations, shedding their beams on times of profound night, and on skies of thickened clouds, fires lighting the steps of one generation to another—to the gardens of Nero, to the vallies in Piedmont, and to the flames of Smithfield. I could point you to thousands of dungeons dark and dismal, *where holy men have* drawn out their lives, illustrating the estimate in which *their piety is held by the* men of this world. But it is not needful. I affirm that

there is opposition enough in any age to *test* your character and show what you are. It may meet you in the family, and the eye of a father shall reprove you for being a Christian; or the tongue of a brother shall deride you for your serious piety. It may meet you in the circle of friends, and the voice of professed affection shall speak of you as gloomy and superstitious for your humble and conscientious regard for God. It may meet you in public and political life, and subject the soul to a daily and constant test whether there is strength of piety sufficient to *avow* the despised doctrines and precepts of the cross, and to make them the governing principle of the life. They who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; and one design of persecution is to *develop* the strength of the Christian principle.

There are *allurements* enough to try the Christian principle, and to show to the believer what he is. A corrupt and giddy world is around him testing his character. Places of amusement open their doors. The sound of the viol, the harp, and the organ invite you. Nay, deeper and still more damning places of guilt often are presented to the Christian. The theatre, the places of abomination where God is derided and virtue defied, and ridiculed, and cursed, dare to invite even a friend of God. And all such allurements try the character: they ascertain whether you have strength of Christian principle to resist the sin when it is presented in alluring forms, and maintain your integrity when the voice of the syren invites you. So the path of ambition is opened before a man to see whether he will consent to *sink* the Christian character for the sake of office; whether he can climb the steps of fame with Christian simplicity of character; or whether he prefers the vale of humble piety, content with the esteem of men and the unalloyed hopes of heaven. So the business, the enterprise, the gains of commerce are presented to the view. The splendors of wealth allure; the ports of the world are open for successful commerce; wealth glitters in the eye, and it invites you to toil and enterprise. That you should refuse to devote yourself to industry, and make full proof of commercial skill will not be maintained. But who would dare to maintain that here was no signal and eminent trial of the Christian spirit?

Again. There is enough of *affliction* in the world to try the Christian. Nor is there one of us who, in the course of our lives, shall not have full opportunity to show what we *are* in times of trial, bereavement, and wo. God designs that there the Christian principle shall triumph; that it shall be fully equal to all the pains that we may be called to endure. He *varies* those afflictions to bring us fully and fairly out. Now he takes away our health, to see how we will bear protracted disease; now he removes our property, to see how we will bear the loss of an idol; now he cuts down the child of our hopes, and tries whether we will be still and know that he is God; and now he opens before our own view approaching death, to try whether we have confidence enough *in him* to commit our departing spirits to the guidance of his unseen hand. In all these scenes it is designed that our piety should shine forth with a benign and pure effulgence —brightening like the beams of the morning, and burning with intenser rays like the sun as it ascends above the clouds, or looks forth from the tempest to ride the meridian sky.

God has placed us in a world eminently adapted to call forth the peculiar principles of the Christian; and in a world too, where, if those principles are *not* called forth, it is full proof that they do not exist. See a race of sufferers; a world of mourners; entire tribes of sinners. Christians, you hold in your hands that gospel which will send peace around the globe—that glorious gospel of the blessed God that may enlighten all nations, alleviate every sorrow, comfort every mourner, and change the aspect of every kingdom and tribe of men. Nor *can you be inactive, or undecided on this subject.* Every time this great

question is presented to you, in whatever form, it calls on you to act. Every plan of benevolence that is submitted to you affords an opportunity to *test* your character, and will actually *develop* that character. And as if God would present to his people the *highest* possible inducements to devote themselves to the good of men, he has placed before them an entire world of sufferers and sinners, that they may make *full* proof of their Christian principle. As if he would excite them in the highest manner, he has foretold brighter days of the church, and assured us that times are advancing that shall correspond with the deepest desires of the people of God. And as if he would set his seal to the expression of Christian feeling in regard to the pagan world, he has followed the efforts of his people with a signal blessing. Now it was precisely this state of things that called forth the burning ardor of Paul. Nay, more, it was the view of the deep guilt and woes of suffering man that moved the Son of God with compassion, and led to the self-denial of his ministry, and the agonies of the garden and the cross. I need not add, that if the woes and dangers of man found their way to the bosom of God's own Son, it is not to be wondered at that they should find their way also to all who are his followers. Can a man be a Christian whose bosom *does not* respond in this to the feelings of the Lord Jesus? If I have read the oracles of religion aright, he cannot.

Once more. Every Christian is placed amid domestic scenes and circles of friendship that will bring out his character. You have a child unrenewed. That child will soon stand at the bar of God. Nay, that child shall tread the deep profound of the eternal world, and live for ever. Need we put to a Christian parent, to excite his interest, the question whether that child shall live for ever in heaven or in hell? There is a feeling in a *Christian* bosom that anticipates this question, and there is much in the situation of that child to bring the Christian out and develop his character. You have a parent who has watched over your infancy, and been always kind; but that parent is not a Christian. Can there be any thing among mortal men so fitted to call forth deep feeling in the youthful Christian bosom as the sight of the parent's venerable locks, and the feeling that that parent is going unrenewed to the bar of God? You are a brother, or a sister, or a friend. The leaden, slow-moving ages of eternity are before your unconverted friends; and what in all the universe is better fitted than this to call forth all the Christian within you to humble and holy effort to save those friends from the deep shades of eternal night? You are members of a Christian church. Does it slumber? Have the shades of a heavy night fallen on our eyelids? Are there hundreds who have no professed interest in all that the Redeemer has done to save them? Are they unrenewed, unpardoned,—what is, alas! most deeply melancholy—unconcerned, and unalarmed? They go to eternity, and they appeal to the Christian to put forth all his efforts to save them from death. You live in an age when your influence in the cause of revivals and Christian benevolence may be felt around the globe. The utmost pagan tribe; the blackest, foulest cell of guilt, and filth, and wo; the darkest dungeon of depravity on pagan soils *may* be reached by your benefactions. A revival of religion in any church, such as existed in the day of Pentecost, *might* be felt in its influence in all this land, and in every land. The development of your Christian principles, my fellow-members of the church, is what the world demands, and what the Savior who died asks of you. If his death will not do it, there are no motives in the universe that will. There is no other blood; there are no other groans; there can be no more such dying agonies.

SERMON CXXVI.

BY ALBERT BARNES.

REASONS WHY THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER SHOULD BE DEVELOPED.

MATT. v. 14, 15, 16.—*Ye are the light of the world, &c.*

In my former discourse I endeavored to prove that the Christian character *will be* developed in all cases where there is piety in the heart; that it is not merely a matter of obligation that the piety of Christians should be manifest, but it is a matter of sober truth that where it exists it *will be* manifest; and that the world is admirably adapted to bring out the character of man; to show what the sinner is, what the hypocrite is, and what the Christian is, and where he *may be found*. In the prosecution of the *same* subject I wish now to furnish an answer to one single question, *Why should* the Christian character be made *manifest*, or be developed?

Our Savior has given us the answer in the text. It is for two objects: two objects which blend themselves together, and result in the same thing,—*first*, that our good works *may be seen*; and *second*, that *being seen*, they may lead others to embrace the same religion, and glorify God by a holy life.

I. My first argument is, that *religion is of no value unless it is brought out, and made manifest to the world.* What is the use of *light* if it be hid under a bushel? What the value of parental affection unless it is brought out, so as to benefit your children? What the use of friendship, if your friend can never calculate on your aid in times of necessity? What would be the value of patriotism, if your country could not depend on you in times of danger? What is the value of the skill of a physician, unless the sick can calculate on his willingness to impart aid? What is the value of rich golden ore unless it be recovered from the earth, and turned to a circulating medium, and be made the means of comfort or of benevolence?

Just so it is with religion. What is the value of a *profession* of religion, where there is no living, humble, devoted piety? Of just as much value as would be the expression of parental tenderness while the parent would see his child languish with disease, and not seek relief; or sick or in prison, and not come to him: or as would be the piteous moanings of friendship, when your professed friend would see you pine in want, or incarcerated for a debt which he could easily discharge, and not lift a finger to aid you; or as would have been the professions of Washington about liberty and love of country if he had sought repose in the shades of Mount Vernon, or of Robert Morris had he hoarded his gold, and seen an army famished and naked, bleed and die without aid. What is the *common* value of a profession of religion where there is manifestly nothing more? What but to bring a reproach on the cause which can never be wiped away; to put an argument into the mouth of scoffers, which we can never meet; to parry all the appeals which we make to the consciences of sinners, and to hang heavy weights on the chariot-wheels of the great Redeemer?

That there will be *concealment* of principles in heaven—any diffident, and retiring piety where man can take refuge for want of decision, in the plea of *unostentatiousness*,—and where the assumption of modesty may be pleaded in

bar of the command to be seen and known as the friend of God, no man can pretend. Christ will cease, says Paul, to be admired *in all them that believe;* and they that be wise, says Daniel, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever; and then, says the Savior, shall the righteous *shine forth* as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

II. The Christian should manifest his character, because *he lives for nothing else.* When a man is converted to God, he is prepared that moment for heaven; —that is, he has passed through the great revolution of moral feeling which will henceforward distinguish him from the wicked; and if he then dies, God will receive him to rest. It becomes then a most interesting question, *why* does God continue his stay on the earth? Why does he ordain that he shall still be doomed to live in a world of sin—to encounter contempt, and persecution, and poverty, and temptation, and lingering disease? Were an angel of bliss arrested in heaven, and commanded to descend to our scenes of calamity and want and wo—to be the tenant of a human body, and the object of the ribaldry and scorn of the world, it would be a case for which he would expect that some reason could be rendered. Now, whatever *might* be the conjectures of such a pure spirit in regard to the design for which he should live on the earth, they would *not be* the following. He would *not* conclude, 1st. That his business here was to become rich, and to lay his riches by in some useless deposit. God values gold too little to redeem *a man*, or to employ *an angel*, for the sole purpose of accumulating it. The shedding of the Savior's blood and the influences of the Holy Spirit had some other design than to brighten the faculties of man for successful purposes of gain. He who could make the mines of Potosi, or the gold of Ophir, or the diamonds of Golconda as easily as he could the coarse granite, needs no such waste of means to bring accumulated property into the universe. Nor, 2d. would it be, that he might sit down in ease, and recline on a bed of down, for the sole purpose of enjoyment. This is manifestly *not* the world for such repose; nor was it a part of the promises, that this should be the allotment of the Christian.

Enough of our race are influenced solely by a regard to wealth, and pleasure, and fame. Enough under the influence of native feeling, tread the paths of ambition, and cross oceans and hills in pursuit of gold. Enough crowd the places of amusement; lie down in the lap of luxurious enjoyment, and walk in the ways of pride and vanity. To this number of melancholy magnitude, it is *not* well that there should be added the name of the Christian. In this whole revolted world, it is well to believe that there are *some* who are influenced by other motives, and live for other ends.

But if the Christian lives for none of these things, what is the object for which he is continued on earth? I answer, that it is, first, that his character may be developed—that the principles of the man may be brought out—that it may be seen and known what he is. It is to show the signal triumphs of the grace of God, in overcoming the deep-laid native propensities of the man; in subduing wild and evil passions amid objects fitted to excite; in breaking his hold on the world, when ten thousand allurements are around; and in unclenching the hand of avarice; smoothing the brow of care; stilling the whisperings of envy; opening the heart of selfishness; and chaining down a wayward imagination to a sober, humble view of the realities of this, and the world to come. This is manifestly the design of religion as presented in the New Testament. *And where this* does *not* exist, we say that there religion has no power—that it *makes no distinction between* its professed friends, and other men. The second *design of our continuance* here is, that the evidence of our religion may so shine

as that others may be benefited by our living. For no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. That this is the design of the Christian's living is clear from the example of Christ and the apostles. They believed that the Christian life *might* be turned to great practical account. They gave themselves to the great enterprise of saving a dying world; and the world felt that they *did live*, and Satan's empire through all its hosts gave signs of wo that all was lost. The Christian now lives for this. The salvation of men excites a deep interest in his bosom. It *is* an object for which he will pray, and toil, and deny himself. I say not that it is an object for which he *ought* to feel, but it is one which he *does* feel. It is a part of the man—the thing by which he is known—which constitutes his *individuality*—and by which he will be estimated at the judgment-seat of God.

III. The Christian character should be developed, because *there is no reason for its concealment.* The Christian, so far as he is a Christian, has nothing which he desires to hide from the notice of any being, created or uncreated. This is clear from the New Testament. He that is ashamed of me and of my words before men, said the Son of God, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed before his Father and the holy angels. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple. The life of Christ shows also that this was the grand principle on which *he* acted. He affected no disguise. He concealed no sentiments. His views of sinners he advanced with the utmost fearlessness. His judgment respecting hypocrites he proclaimed in their presence, at the hazard of his life. His doctrines he advanced alike amid the rich and the poor, at Jerusalem, and on the hills of Galilee. He felt deeply at the condition of dying sinners, and the impending calamities of Jerusalem; and the dignified and exalted Son of God was not ashamed to be seen weeping over the doom of the devoted city. How many Christians on the earth are there now who would feel themselves degraded to be seen weeping at the prospect of the impending damnation of sinners? How much persecution would *he* have saved by a prudent reserve, by concealing his tears, by a time-serving policy, by a studied *trimming* between the service of God and the world. How peaceful might have been his life in the hills of Galilee, if he had advanced no sentiments but such as fell in with the previous views of the people!—So judged also the apostle Paul. He felt for the condition of a dying world, and he was not ashamed to have his feelings known. He felt for the condition of men deceived in the church, and he was not ashamed to say, "I tell you *even weeping* that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction." Nor was he held back by any views of prudence and ease, from letting it be felt to the ends of the world that he believed men to be in danger, and was resolved that they should *know* his feelings at any expense of time, or toil, or pain, or blood.

Now religion affects no concealment. It has nothing to disguise. The sun, the moon, the stars, the heavens have nothing to conceal—nor has the Christian. There is not a sentiment in the Bible, nor a duty, which he wishes or is willing to conceal. There is not a doctrine, however repulsive, that he does not wish should be known, and which he is not willing by any feasible or proper way to make known. The whole operations of religion are above-board. We have no mysteries—and religion keeps back nothing from the Christian. It does not permit us to doubt that there is a hell, and that the wicked are descending there—and the Christian is willing that you should know that he thinks so. Christianity frowns on your foolish pleasures, your gayety, and fashions, and frivolity; your theatres, and places of revelry, and the Christian is *not ashamed that you should know he thinks so.* Christianity regards every

man as by nature the enemy of God, needing renovation, and in danger of eternal wo, and the Christian hides not this opinion. Christianity seeks the destruction of your schemes of wickedness; the humbling of the heart of pride; the annihilation of your plans of grandeur and ambition. It seeks an entire change in the feelings, thoughts, purposes, deeds, and destiny of the wicked, and is willing that you should know that this is its aim.

Now are these things which we are to conceal? Are we to shut the great truths of our redemption from the view? Or, what is the same thing, are we to live *as though* these were not true—are we to conceal in our bosoms that living and active principle which separates us from others, and leave the impression on them that we esteem them safe, and that we have no belief of their danger? Are we to make all the arrangements of our livings—order all the circumstances of our families—array our persons with as splendid attire, and be as gay, and giddy and thoughtless as though we were just like others—living for the same ends, and putting forth no effort for their salvation? Who is it that practises concealment? The wretch who has some plan of evil. The man who wishes to insinuate himself into your favor to obtain by fraud your gold. The infidel, the drunkard, the gambler, who is aiming at your money or your principles. The seducer, who would undermine your virtue. He who would betray your confidence—who uses oily and smooth, and cunning flattery to ruin you—who overlooks your faults; commends your foibles; praises your beauty, your skill, or your learning; professes profound admiration of your accomplishments, to make you a prey to his selfish designs.—And shall the Christian be ranked with such men? Is *he* a man who believes a thing in his heart, and attempts to *pass off* a different opinion in his life? Is he a man whose characteristic it is that he wishes to convince you that he still loves the world—that he feels no interest in the salvation of man—who strives to imitate the gay, to associate with the great rather than the pious, to cultivate the society of the rich, rather than those who fear God? You have the hope of heaven. Is that a hope which it is your aim to conceal? You feel that you are a sinner. Are you ashamed that this feeling should be known? Are you unwilling that it should be known that you pray, or fear God; or can deny yourself for the cause of benevolence? Are you undistinguished from your fellow-men, except at the communion table? Then there centres all your religion. And under the plea that religion is modest and unobtrusive, that it seeks retirement, how many *appear* just like the men of the world—lay plans just like the men of the world—aspire to office just like the men of the world—live, feel, act, just like the men of the world—deny themselves as little, lay plans of gain as greedily, are as much moved at losses, and as little known in places of prayer, and in their closets, turn as coolly away from plans of benevolence, grasp their gold as tightly, and use their influence as reluctantly, as the men who profess to be influenced only by a regard to this world. When religion retires thus, the world may well ask, what is its value?—Nor can we find a ready answer.

IV. The Christian should manifest his religion for the sake of *the power of his example over other men.*

There is nothing in this world that has so much power over a man as the gospel; and there is nothing that will so affect the mind of a sinner—so try *him*, and bring *him out*, as a life of active and decided piety on the part of a Christian. But in order that this may be seen, it is proper to advert to a singular abuse of one of the loveliest traits of the Savior's life among his professed *friends*. The Savior was modest, was retiring, was unostentatious. He sought *the shades of private life*, and rebuked noise and display. He frowned on open *and public proclamation of* our piety, our prayers, and our alms. All this is

very true. But it is perfectly easy to see how a man who *does nothing*, and who *intends* to do nothing, may make a cloak of this for his indolence. The Savior's life was retiring—so is indolence. His maxims were unostentatious—so is inactivity. His prayers were unseen—so is the neglect of prayer. He gave his life in an unostentatious way to the service of mankind. So the man who does nothing, who lives like other men, who is undecided and unknown as a Christian—so does he sink out of view, and repose in obscurity. The Savior frowned on pride, and parade, and noise. So it is easy for any one to denounce ostentation—to regard deep feelings as parade, and expanded benevolence as ostentation and display. And yet it is not a strange thing if the whole character of the Savior should be mistaken. On pride he did frown, but not on *manifested* humility. On ostentation he did frown, but it was the ostentation of the Pharisee. On improper zeal in error and delusion he did frown, and so he did on those who were neither cold nor hot. On proclamation of our doings he did frown—and so he did on those who had nothing to proclaim, and who lived like other men. Now what is the thing that the Son of God meant to reach in all this? It was a false and hypocritical exhibition of what we do not possess. It was show of what was not deep-felt in the soul. It was that which the *hypocrite* always manifests—display of what he feels not—profession of that which is not believed: and this is the same as a profession of religion at the communion table, when there is none elsewhere; and public deference to its outward forms, when the whole life is like that of other men. But never—no, never, in his whole ministry, did he lisp a syllable against its being seen, and felt, and known, where we are to be found, and against the proper and public manifestation of a life of decided piety. His whole life was just such an exhibition. The zeal of thine house, saith he, hath eaten me up; and his professions at the bar of Pilate; his unshrinking fidelity even in view of death; and his last pangs on the cross, showed where he was to be found.

Here we may make another remark. It is that religion supposes something *in advance* of other men. The world has come up to a certain elevation, and says it will honor religion if it will remain stationary at this level. If it will reprove few of its vices, and those of grosser form; if it will leave undisturbed its more refined pleasures; if it will not rebuke its gayety, and fashion, and pride; if it will be found at the same festive board, and suppress its peculiarities: if it will covenant that the peace of the sinner shall not be disturbed; and the great designs of God's benevolence be not pressed on the attention of men, it will speak smoothly of religion and its friends. Thus a covenant is easily made with death, and a league with hell. There is a truce in the warfare, and the world yields just as much as the church yields, and any decided movement in behalf of perishing sinners is regarded as a breach of compact, or an invasion of right. Religion, thus peaceful and still—thus undecided and unobtrusive, is the praise of every sinner's lips. It is eminently, in his view, the religion of peace, and it has reconciled the world unto itself. There is no emotion, no opposition, no conflict; there is no irritation, no movement, no feeling. The world is willing that the church should secure all the triumphs it can, for it disturbs no man's peace, disquiets no man's conscience, breaks in upon no man's vices or pleasures. It is willing even that men should become united to the church of God; for it implies no self-denial, no abandonment of pleasure, no *obligation* to do any thing to save man or to benefit the world. There *is peace*. But there is peace like this also elsewhere. There was peace, and unity, and concord, in the lonely valley which Ezekiel trod, which was full of bones, very many and very dry. There is peace like this in the hollow tombs, in the charnel-house of the dead—where no lip moves to reprove the living, no eye is fired with indignation at the sins of man, no one

of the still and solemn people there lifts a finger to warn the gay and the foolish that they are going to hell. There is a union there which nothing disturbs, and which is never broken, except when one and another is laid, solemn and still, and noiseless, in the vaults of the dead—as hypocrites still dead in sin become attached to a slumbering church.

Now it is not a religion or a peace like this of which I speak when I say, that Christianity has power over men, and that the Christian should let his light shine that he may do good. I speak of that only which is *in advance* of other men—which is open and decided. There is no development of Christianity when you go just as far as the *world will speak well of you, and then stop.* Wo, said the Savior to his disciples, "wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did they to the false prophets." An ancient Grecian orator was accustomed to say, "what foolish thing have I uttered that the people applaud me?" A Christian may well begin to fear when all are loud in his praise. The Christian minister should seek his closet when his praise is on the lips of the gay, and foolish, and wicked, and when he has said nothing to disturb their peace. Our account is laid *in exciting feeling*, and better is *any* emotion than the still, prolonged slumbers of the dead; better any note than the everlasting and dreary silence of the tombs. So thought the Savior. He came for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against, that thereby the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed. And he finished *his* work. He was in *advance* of his age. He had new views, new plans, new projects, new endeavors. Never had Scribe, or Pharisee, or Priest, dreamed that the peace of Judea was to be disturbed by a religion so pure, so humble, so bold, so spiritual. Never had the great and lordly ruler supposed that one who was rich, yet for the sake of others could become poor, that he might make many rich. Never had it occurred to a Jewish teacher that any one could be bold enough to declare, or to risk his reputation on the declaration, that they who have riches should with difficulty enter into the kingdom of God; or to represent a rich man as calling in vain in hell for a drop of water from a poor beggar to cool his tongue. Never had they dreamed that there was to be a religion that was to move all the people—break in upon the dull monotony of the synagogue, or overthrow the tables of the money-changers in the temple—that was to produce *excitement*, and inquiry, and alarm—that was to lead thousands in a day to cry with deep solicitude, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? Yet he showed *what and where he was.* No one mistook him; nor was the proudest man or the richest man ever at a loss to see that Jesus Christ was actuated by some principle prodigiously *in advance* of other men. And his power was felt. His name was known. His words *stung* in the hearts of his hearers, and his preaching vibrated long in the ears of the goaded and irritated Pharisee.

So religion, if it be any thing, is always in advance of the world. It has a train of measures that are to be *felt.* It holds up a set of doctrines that are to tell on the soul. It has no concealment. It aims at the renovation of the entire world; and it seeks to apprize you that it is on this embassy, and that it has nothing *but this* to do in the world. But for its designs on your pride and plans, your hearts and lives, your follies and your wealth, it might to-day take its flight to its native heavens, and leave the world to perish *as it is.* But it seeks that its principles may be known. And it *supposes* that its most humbling doctrines, its most repulsive measures, its most stern features, should be held up by Christians themselves *in advance* of their fellow men. So Jesus stood before the Sanhedrim; so Paul stood before Felix; so Peter sought the imperial city; and so John, and James, and Matthew went among the nations of the earth, not modestly *to conceal, but to make known* the unsearchable riches of Christ. And so there is

no Christian—there *can be* none; it is one of the axioms, the elementary truths, the first principles of Christianity, that there can be none who will conceal his sentiments—that he that is ashamed of Christ and his words before men, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the clouds, with the glory of his Father and the holy angels.

Now, when we ask what is the proper effect of a life of decided piety, or *why* the Savior supposed that letting our light shine would have such an effect on men, the answer is at hand. For, 1. It shows what men are. It shows to sinners that they *differ* from others—that they are neglecting their salvation and going down to wo. An object may be totally deformed, or odious, and in the darkness of midnight it will strike no one. Pour on it a flood of day, and it will be seen. A sinner will be calm and thoughtless so long as he supposes he is as good as others. Live so that he may be reproved by your life. Let your conduct be a rebuke of his; your benevolence, a reproof of his avarice; your prayers, of his thoughtlessness; your seriousness, of his gayety; and your heavenly-mindedness, of his sensuality; and he will feel it. 2. The life of a Christian is an argument of the truth of Christianity, which he will see and know. We may preach in this matter, and no man will feel it. The world is full of books proving that religion is true, but who reads them? We can pile demonstration on demonstration, but they are cold abstractions, and all our demonstrations will be overturned in their practical effects by one cold and cutting remark of an infidel world: "See how your Christians live. See them just as gay as I *wish* to be. See them as thoughtless as I *desire* to be. See them just as inactive as I have any inclination to be. See them as fond of the world, as greedy of gain, as ambitious, as sumptuous in their style of dress and living, as I desire to be. See them do as little for the conversion of sinners and the spread of the gospel as I do. Such a religion, with all your demonstrations, is worth little; and it cannot be of much moment whether I follow the inclinations of my heart *within* or *without* the pale of the Christian church." But there is another side to this picture. The remarks of the infidel have not reached the *Christian* yet. There *is* an argument which infidelity must feel, and before which guilt will tremble. It is when Christianity reforms the sinner; silences the profane; reclaims the drunkard, the gay, and the worldly. The argument of such a life will be felt when our tomes of cold demonstration shall lie forgotten on our shelves. But what is this argument? It is this. That Christianity changes the man. That the change is seen in all his life. It is not that he is simply a *professor* of religion. That is *no* change. It is not that he is *periodically* religious, like the return of a quartan ague; or *prudentially religious*, at distant intervals; or a pious man, like the visits of angels, few and far between. It is that you know where to find him—that he is uniform, steady, like the light of a morning unbroken by mists, or the beams of a noonday unobscured by clouds and tempests. You know the power which a man has, who, in perils of field and flood—on the cold ground and in the cannon's mouth—serves his country. You know how different this from that frothy periodical patriotism which declaims on its beauty, and then sinks on a bed of down; which is eloquent with the praise of valor, and then is seen no more. So much difference is there between the example of him *in the church* who serves God, and him *in the church* who serves him not. 3. The world understands what religion is. They *know* that it is more than a name, a bugbear, or a shadow. And hence they scoff at professors, and deride our pretences of piety. Now the only way to silence the world, is to do it by your life. Argument will not do it. But a life of religion *will*. It will do more. It will not only *silence*, it will *subdue*. It will not merely close the mouth, it will find its way to the heart. The world knows that *the conduct of Christ was* different from that of other men And they under-

stand that when professed Christians do not live like him, they *are* not Christians, and they are not slow in expressing their convictions—NOR SHOULD THEY BE. They are in the right of it *there*, and once at least sinners shall find *me* defending the correctness of their conclusions, and endeavoring to carry forward their demonstrations. 4. There is nothing so well fitted to convert men as a Christian life. God blesses such a life. He follows it with the influences of his grace. See a Christian self-denied. See him abandon every thing which is not *Christian*. See him lay aside the emblems of pride, of gayety, of luxury. See him unambitious of honors. See him the friend of the poor, of the widow. See him live in an atmosphere of prayer; breathe forth the aspirations of devotion; turn aside from the allurements of the world. See him lay himself and all he has on the altars of God. See him the patron of those great designs that look to the conversion of all mankind. See the iron bands which fetter other men fall around him; the ice of selfishness and avarice dissolve. See his great wealth freely given, and that which calls forth all the energies of the men of this world—that for which *they* live, see it all yield in his heart and life to the influence of some mightier principle. See the gospel in his soul have such an ascendency that it humbles his pride, subdues his feelings, unclenches his hands from gold and office, and makes him a large and liberal benefactor of mankind. Who doubts that Howard was under the influence of some such principle? Who doubts it of Wilberforce? of Martin? of Edwards? No man doubts it any more than *I* doubt that he who has never done one of these things is *not a Christian*. See the gospel shed its peace in affliction, silence murmurs, restrain passion, sustain the sinking soul, and bear it up in the agonies of death. Who doubts that there is something in religion then? No man doubts it: and no man doubts that where none of these things exist, there is nothing in his religion. It is name, emptiness, vanity, imposition that deceives no one; profession that no one mistakes; pretension that never beguiles; a cloak that conceals nothing; an assumption which every man understands, and which every man, and which God, despises and abhors. The Savior understood all this, and felt more deeply than *I* do, or than *I* can express, that no good would be done unless the light of his people shine so that others should see their good works and glorify their heavenly Father.

V. A fifth reason for this is, that God will in this way be honored. A mere profession does *not* honor him. A life of inactivity does not honor him. The most staid and formal regularity, where there is no Christian *life*, does not honor him, any more than the solemn corpse of the dead laid in state is an honor to living men. The Christian honors God; the sun does that by *his* light, the moon and the stars of heaven by *theirs*; so does he by *his light*. The hills, the trees, the streams, the flowers, the ocean honor God. The Christian does it more than all. One *word* spoke *them all* into being. But your piety cost the labors, the long agonies, the groans of God's only Son. One word may turn them all to nothing, but your piety shall show forth his praise for ever and for ever.

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SERMON CXXVII.

BY BENNETT TYLER, D. D.

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HUMAN AND DIVINE AGENCY UNITED IN THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL.

PHIL. ii. 12, 13.—*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

MANY have found it difficult to understand how human and divine agency are united in the work of man's salvation. There are two opposite extremes into which mankind are prone to run on this subject. One is, to ascribe the work to God in such a sense as to exclude the agency of man. The other is, to ascribe it to man in such a sense as to exclude the agency of God. These extremes are equally wide of the truth.

That *salvation is of the Lord* is evident from the whole tenor of the Scriptures. And that man must *work out his own salvation* is equally evident. Now the question is, in what sense is this work to be ascribed to God; and in what sense to man? In other words, what does God do towards the salvation of the sinner; and what does the sinner do himself?

It is the opinion of some, that all which God does is to provide the way of salvation—to enable man to comply with the terms on which it is offered—and to present suitable motives to induce him to comply.

Now it is admitted that God has done all this for all men.

He has provided a Savior. He has *so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Christ hath tasted death for every man;* and become *the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.*

Salvation is freely offered to all. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

All men are made capable of complying with the invitations of the gospel; that is, they possess all the powers of moral agency. They have an understanding to perceive the rule of duty—a conscience to feel obligation—and a will to choose. With these powers they were created; and they need no new powers to render them capable of performing every duty which God requires. I am aware, that it has

been supposed by some that the strivings of the Spirit are granted to *enable* men to do their duty. But this opinion is evidently erroneous; for it implies that sinners, antecedent to the strivings of the Spirit, are not *able* to do their duty, and consequently are not culpable for neglecting it. Besides, if sinners without the striving of the Spirit are *incapable* of doing their duty, then God is in justice bound to grant them the strivings of the Spirit, or to excuse them from doing their duty; an alternative utterly subversive of the whole system of grace. But the object for which the Spirit strives with sinners is not to *enable* them to do their duty, but to convince them of sin. It gives no new powers to the sinner. These he did not need; for he possessed before all the powers of moral agency. If it were not so, he would not be accountable nor criminal. All men, therefore, are made capable of complying with the terms of the gospel.

Suitable motives are also set before them to induce them to comply. God, in his word, has offered heaven with all its glories on the one hand; and threatened hell with all its miseries on the other. More powerful motives than these cannot possibly be presented to the human mind.

All this God has done for all men. He has provided a Savior. He has offered salvation. He has made all men capable of accepting it; and presented to them the most powerful motives to induce them to accept.

The question now is, Is this all which God ever does for the salvation of any of the human race?

Before I proceed to answer this inquiry, I will premise one or two remarks.

1. If this were all which God ever does for the salvation of any of the human race, it is more than they have any right to demand. Man, as a sinner, has no claim to any favor. He is justly condemned; and a criminal justly condemned has no claim to pardon, or to the offer of pardon on any condition whatever. God was under no obligation to provide a Savior, or to offer salvation to one of the human race. In doing it, therefore, he has done more for them than they had any right to claim. He has displayed the riches of his grace.

2. Supposing this were all which God has done for the salvation of any of the human race, those who perish will not only perish justly, but their condemnation will be pre-eminently just. It will be seen by all intelligent beings in the universe, that they perish wholly through their own fault. Why do any perish? In the first place, they have transgressed the divine law, and fallen under its curse; and as the law is holy, just, and good, their condemnation is just. But God has not left them in this state without hope. He has given his Son to be a propitiation for their sins, and offered them pardon on reasonable conditions; on conditions with which they are capable of complying; and set before them the strongest inducements to accept. And now why do they perish? Because they voluntarily reject the mercy offered. And can they now charge their ruin upon their Maker? When he has provided an atonement for them, and thrown open the door of heaven, and invited them to enter; can they say that it is his fault

that they are not saved? If a poor beggar spurns from him the hand that offers to feed him, whose fault is it that he perishes with hunger? If a criminal, who is justly condemned refuses to accept a pardon which is freely offered to him, whose fault is it if he is not pardoned? And if sinners who are justly condemned refuse to accept the salvation which is freely offered to them, whose fault is it if they perish? What has God done to hinder their salvation? Has he compelled them to sin? Has he laid them under restraint? Has he hedged up the path of life so that they cannot walk in it if they choose? No. They are laid under no restraint. Life and death are set before them, and they are capable of choosing between them. The reason that they perish is, that they reject the counsel of God against themselves. They choose the road that leads to death, and *will not come to Christ, that they might have life.* Thus they perish wholly through their own fault, and will have none to blame but themselves.

But the question returns,—Is this all which God ever does for the salvation of any of the human race? On the supposition that it is all, the question at once arises, how comes it to pass that some obey the gospel, while others disobey? To what are we to attribute this difference? If all which God does is to prepare the way for all, and place suitable motives before them; why do not all comply, or all refuse? They are alike free agents, and capable of being influenced by motives. Why then do some yield to the motives, while others resist them? Why do some make a right use of their free agency, while others pervert it? If God does no more to give efficacy to motives in one case than in another, why do not the same motives produce the same effects in all cases? Why did Peter believe in Christ, while Judas remained an unbeliever? Why did Paul become a disciple, while multitudes of the Pharisees persisted in unbelief? Why did one of the thieves on the cross embrace Christ, while the other continued to revile him? And why is it, that wherever the gospel has been preached, some have believed, while others have believed not?

Will it be said, that those who believe are by nature less depraved, less averse to holiness, and more inclined to yield to the motives of the Gospel, than others? This cannot be said with truth; for *as in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.* They are *all by nature children of wrath.* Besides, not a few who have been distinguished for their wickedness, and for their hostility to the truth, have been made the subjects of renewing grace. Paul testifies that he was the chief of sinners, and yet he obtained mercy, while many who manifested far less opposition to Christianity continued in unbelief. How is this fact to be explained? Besides, if God only presents motives to the mind, why is it that the same motives which have long been resisted, sometimes prove effectual? Why is a sinner sometimes converted, after having long abused the means of grace, and resisted every motive presented to his mind? If God does no more to render means efficacious at one time than at another, why were they not effectual upon the individual supposed, while his heart was less hard, and his habits in sin less confirmed? These facts are utterly inexplicable, without admitting a special Divine agency in the conversion of sinners.

But, to the law, and to the testimony. The apostle says, *By the grace of God I am what I am.* He felt that it was owing to the distinguishing grace of God, that he was brought to embrace that Savior whom he had rejected and despised. And to the same grace he ascribed the salvation of all true believers. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?* To the Ephesian believers he says, *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved): and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* To the Philippians he says in the text, *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* Is this doing no more than to prepare the way of salvation, to *enable* men to accept offered mercy, and to present motives to their minds? God is here represented as performing a work in them. And what is the work? *It is God that worketh in you* TO WILL AND TO DO. This surely is something different from giving them ability to do their duty; it is making them willing to do it. Agreeably to the declaration of the Psalmist,—*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* The great point of difference between the saint and the sinner is, the one is willing to do his duty, the other is not willing. It does not lie in the fact that one has opportunity and ability to secure eternal life, while the other has not. Both are alike free agents. Both have the same opportunity and ability to obtain an interest in Christ. But one is willing to obey the gospel, and the other is not. Sinners *will not come to Christ that they might have life.* Hence it is necessary, not only that the way of salvation should be prepared, and mercy offered, and motives presented; but that God should *work in men* TO WILL AND TO DO, that is, that he should incline their hearts to accept the mercy offered. That he actually does this for all those who are the subjects of his grace, the Scriptures explicitly assure us. *A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

If we look through the Bible, we shall find, that all the Christian graces are ascribed to God as their author.

He is the author of repentance. *Him hath God exalted at his own right hand,* TO GIVE REPENTANCE *unto Israel and remission of sins.*

Then hath God also to the gentiles GRANTED REPENTANCE *unto life. In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will* GIVE THEM REPENTANCE.

Faith, in no less explicit terms, is ascribed to God as its author. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves,* IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. *Looking unto Jesus* THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH. *Wherein also ye are risen with him through* THE FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD.

Love is the gift of God. *The fruit of the Spirit is love. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*

A spirit of prayer is the gift of God. *We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a spirit of grace and of supplication.*

God is the author of all the Christian graces. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, patience, faith.*

In short, the Christian character is of his formation. *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who hath also given to us the earnest of the Spirit.*

We are now prepared to form some opinion of the nature of that work which God performs in effecting the salvation of sinners. It is not merely an outward work, as some have supposed. It does not consist merely in providing a Savior, offering salvation, giving ability to accept, and presenting motives to the mind. In addition to all this, there is an inward effectual work. God renews the heart. He influences the will. He changes enmity into love, melts the hard heart into penitence, and transforms the rebel into a loyal and obedient subject of his kingdom. In short, he works in his people *to will and to do.*

But in the mean time they must *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.* The agency of God does not destroy the agency of men. On the contrary, it puts their agency into operation, and guides and directs it to a proper end. When God works in men to will and to do—they will and do. They act, and act voluntarily—as much so as if they were entirely independent. To show that this is not impossible, let it be observed, that we act upon the minds of our fellow-men by arguments and persuasions; and we influence their conduct by the motives which we present to their minds. The whole system of intercourse between man and man is a system of mutual influence. But who ever supposed that his agency was destroyed, or his freedom impaired, by the influence exerted upon him by his fellow-men? I do not mean to assert that *the manner* in which God acts upon our minds, is the same as that in which one man acts upon the mind of another. But whatever the manner be, it does not impair our free agency, any more than the influence exerted upon us by our fellow-men. When the sinner is made willing to comply with the invitations of the Gospel, he complies as freely as a man ever complies with the solicitations of a friend.

And here let it be particularly noted, that the special dependence of sinners on God for salvation results entirely from the perverseness of their hearts. The reason that a supernatural Divine influence is necessary to bring them to the belief and obedience of the truth, is not because they are incapable of obeying the Gospel; but because they *will not come to Christ that they might have life.* It is necessary that God should give them repentance, because they will not repent of themselves. If they were inclined to do their duty, they would need no supernatural Divine influence. They are dependent on God for salvation, not because they are not free agents, but because they abuse and pervert their free agency.

Permit me here to correct a mistake into which multitudes have fallen. They always associate the idea of dependence with that of inability to do their duty. When they read in the Scriptures such declarations as the following: *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God:* they conclude that until God shall grant the influences of his Spirit, they are really *unable* to do their duty; and that they need these influences to *give them power* to do their duty. But this is altogether a mistake, and a mistake of very dangerous tendency; for it tends directly to blind the eyes of the sinner to his true character and condition. While he feels that he is *unable* to do his duty, in any other sense than that he is *unwilling*, he does not feel guilty for neglecting it. He views his depravity as a calamity merely, and not as a crime. He does not take the blame to himself, but casts it upon his Maker. He feels that he has a good excuse for neglecting the great salvation, because he persuades himself that he cannot do otherwise. He feels that it is not his fault that he is not a Christian; but that it is owing entirely to the fact that God does not grant his regenerating grace.

Now the truth is, the influences of the Divine Spirit are never granted to give the sinner *ability* to do his duty. He is *able* without them. The sinner has all the natural ability which the saint possesses; and it is wholly his own fault that he does not immediately embrace the Gospel. He is not dependent on God in any such sense, as to furnish him with the least excuse for continuing another moment a rebel against God. *God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.* This is a reasonable command; and every sinner is under obligation to obey it. If he does not obey, he sins. Every moment that he refuses to obey, he sins. He sins voluntarily, and is without excuse.

It will not avail him to plead that he has no power to obey. He has power. If he has power to sin, he has power to cease from sinning—if he has power to rebel against God, he has power to submit to God. He has all the power which he needs: all, indeed, which he can possess. If God were to renew his heart this moment, his power would not be increased; he would only be willing to use aright the power which he now abuses and perverts.

It will not avail him to plead that God has not granted him the influences of his Spirit. Those influences God is under no obligation

to grant; and if he never grants them, the sinner's duty remains the same. When God works in men to will and to do, it is not to *enable* them to do their duty; but to incline them to do what they are *able* to do, and what they ought to do, without any supernatural Divine influence.

But the sinner sometimes says, "Am I able to change my own will?" I know of no better way to answer this inquiry than to apply it to a familiar case. Suppose you have a stubborn, disobedient child, who utterly refuses to obey your commands. You expostulate with him: you show him the reasonableness of your commands, and the consequences of persisting in disobedience: you show him clearly that he is able to obey, and that his continued disobedience is owing solely to his perverse and obstinate will. But still he objects, and justifies himself; and, as his last resort, says, "Can I change my will?" Would you feel that he has now a good excuse? And if you should perceive that his obstinacy was so great as to render fruitless all your persuasions, would you feel that he was really *unable* to obey you, and that he ought to be exonerated from blame? On the contrary, would you not feel that this stubbornness was the very thing for which he was criminal, and that his guilt was in proportion to the degree of his obstinacy. So in the case of sinners; their dependence on divine grace, so far from rendering them guiltless, shows that their guilt is exceedingly heinous, for their dependence results solely from the desperate wickedness of their hearts.

But here another inquiry arises. If it be a fact that sinners will not obey the Gospel till made willing in the day of God's power, why preach to them the Gospel?—Why exhort, and warn, and beseech them to lay hold on eternal life, if nothing short of Divine power will ever influence them to comply with the conditions of pardon?

I answer,—we preach to them the Gospel, because God commands us to do it; and because this is a means which he has ordained to effect the purposes of his grace. His kingdom is a kingdom of means, and *it pleases him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* The word of God is *the sword of the Spirit*, the instrument which he employs in subduing the heart. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. When the truth comes home to the heart and conscience, and the sinner yields to its influence, then it is that God works in him to will and to do. And when any individual finds himself inclined to yield to the motives of the Gospel, he may conclude that God is influencing his mind. It is a secret, silent influence, which is known only by its effects.

How many have the Gospel, upon whom it produces no salutary effect. And why? Not because they are incapable of yielding to the motives of the Gospel; but because they resist these motives. They are unwilling to break off their sins by righteousness—they are unwilling to renounce the world, and take up their cross and follow Christ. And when all the solemn and affecting motives of the Gospel are presented to their minds, they still resist, and *with one consent begin to make excuse.* Such is human nature. Such is the desperate wickedness of the human heart. Hence it is that the sovereign interposition of God is necessary to effect the salvation of apostate man.

Does any one say, "How can I obey the Gospel until God shall renew my heart?" I answer,—the difficulty which lies in your way is not the want of power, but the want of an inclination. If you are really willing to obey, there is nothing to hinder. You need not wait for God to operate on your heart; for if you are truly willing to obey the Gospel, God is now operating on your heart. If he were not, you would not be willing. *Work out, then, your salvation with fear and trembling; lay hold on eternal life; give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.* There is nothing to hinder you from coming to Christ and securing eternal life, if you are willing to come. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* But if you are unwilling, why complain of the want of power? Why say, how can I repent?—how can I believe?—how can I renounce the world? when the fact is, that you are unwilling to do it. Why do you excuse and justify yourself, and cast the blame on your Maker, when, in infinite mercy, he expostulates with you, saying, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live; turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?*

To conclude: in view of this subject, we see the fatal mistake of those who flatter themselves that they have nothing to do. There are many who say, if God has determined to save us, we shall be saved, let us do what we will. We may therefore as well fold our hands, and rest securely in sin, as to seek our salvation. Is any one in this assembly thus quieting his conscience? let me say to him, resting in this presumption, you will not be saved. Is this working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Is this striving to enter in at the strait gate? Is this seeking the Lord while he may be found? Is this running the Christian race, and fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life? Rest assured, that you cannot be saved without your own exertions. You might as well refuse to eat and drink, and trust in God to preserve your life, as to refuse to work out your salvation, and trust in God to save you. If God has determined to save you, you will not be carried to heaven in stupidity and sin. You will be waked from your slumbers. You will find that there is a tremendous weight of responsibility resting on you. You will find that you have something to do—that you have much to do—and you will be disposed to do what your hand findeth to do with your might. If God shall save you, he will save you by causing you to work out your own salvation. And just so long as you are disposed to slumber in this state of spiritual apathy, you have no more reason to expect salvation than you have to look for grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles. O, how many are dreaming of heaven, and waiting, as they imagine, for God to convert them! But, ah! what multitudes have waited all their lives, and are waiting still; and will wait till the quenchless fire shall cease to burn, and the deathless worm shall die.

Sinner, wake, I beseech you, from this delusive dream—flee from this enchanted ground; for *verily as God liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and death. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither tarry in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

SERMON CXXVIII.

BY ALVAN HYDE, D.D.

LEE, MASS.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

GALATIANS, v. 22, 23.—*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

IN the chapter containing the text, the apostle contrasts the appearance and conduct of men as they are by nature, with their appearance and conduct when renewed by the Holy Spirit. "Now the works of the flesh," he says, "are manifest, which are these;—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is a black catalogue of crimes; and they are not peculiar to any age or nation. But what a mighty change does the Holy Ghost produce. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." There is no law against these, because they are exactly what the Divine law requires.

These fruits of the Spirit are essential to the Christian character. Of this Christ fully assures us, when he says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." My brethren, in this day of religious revivals, when the number of Christ's disciples is so greatly multiplied, it is all-important to distinguish between true and false religion. It deeply concerns all to bring their feelings and conduct to the word of God, as the only true test of character. In whatever place, and by whatever instruments and extraordinary means, we may suppose ourselves to have been converted, we cannot expect to reach heaven, unless we, in this world, bring forth *the fruit of the Spirit*. We have before us, then, a subject of great moment, not only to the church, but to the many individuals who hope they have recently passed from death unto life, yea, to all who are candidates for eternity. In discussing it, I have only to follow the method marked out by the apostle in the text.

I. "The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE."

This holy affection is entirely different from the love of the things of this world. If we have been taught of the Spirit, the things of this world, though good in themselves, will all be counted nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison with things unseen and eternal. Whoever has found the pearl of great price considers what he has given up for it, though once his *treasure*, as mean and worthless. He now hates what he once loved, and loves what he once hated. In this great change of mind and affections he has been perfectly free and voluntary as ever he was in laying up a treasure on the earth. The Holy Spirit, in a way not perceived by himself, has

influenced him to love what was *always lovely*, and what, as a rational being, he ought ever to have loved. But what does the Christian love, which he did not when an impenitent sinner? He loves God: he loves his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. To be more particular, he loves the *character* of God, as exhibited in the Bible, and seeks to be acquainted with it;—and the more he contemplates this character, the more he desires to increase his knowledge of it, and the more lovely it appears. The true Christian delights to meditate upon all the natural and moral attributes of God. He has an abiding conviction that God is infinitely great, without beginning, everywhere present, possessing infinite knowledge and power, and unchangeably the same. He loves and adores him as a God of holiness, justice, and mercy. The apostle John says, and the experience of every true disciple of Christ accords with his testimony: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

This love to God is not natural to man,—it is invariably a fruit of the Spirit; and if our souls rest upon God as their best portion, the Holy Spirit has begun to sanctify us "through the belief of the truth." We have found a refuge, and one which is infinitely safe. It will be to us a stronghold in the day of trouble. If we love God, we certainly shall love his *law*, because it is an exhibition of his character. The law is indeed a transcript of the holiness of God. Into this we may look and see what he loves and what he abhors. The true disciple of Christ wishes for no *abatement* of the Divine law, though he is conscious of having fallen under its condemnation. He loves it, because he discerns its purity and perfection. So felt the pious Psalmist, when he said, "Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day."

This love, which is a fruit of the Spirit, is in opposition to selfishness, and extends to our neighbor. It influences all who possess it to seek the welfare of others, and to do good, even to their *enemies*, in direct opposition to the feelings and maxims of this world. Holy love makes men resemble God. And does not God love his enemies? Is he not kind to the evil and unthankful? If this were not true, what hope would there be in the case of rebellious men? What hope in the case of any of us? Let us consider what Christ said on this important point:—"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He so loved the world when men were his *enemies*, and gave unquestionable proof of it, in making ample provision for their pardon. To the same effect is the testimony of the apostle:—"God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were *sinners*, Christ died for us." It is an obvious truth, then, that all who have experienced saving conversion, and have the image of God stamped upon their souls, are, like him, benevolent to their enemies. Such as cherish ill-will towards those who injure them have fearful reason to decide against the genuineness of their religion; for *love worketh no ill to his neighbor*. And how does the true convert, now loving what he formerly hated, feel towards Christ, the great Redeemer of men, who is "God manifest in the flesh?" How does he view his character and his amazing condescension in dying on the cross for his enemies? He *admires this* exhibition of pure benevolence. His love flows out to

Christ, as being the "chief among ten thousands," and it extends to all who bear his image. Love to the brethren is one of the distinctive marks of having "passed from death unto life." It may be further remarked, that when holy love is produced in the heart, it is made manifest by a change of conduct. He who loves God seeks and finds his happiness in *obeying* him. The true convert finds that in keeping God's commandments there is great reward. The reward is found in the *keeping of them;* and of course, he begins to reap as soon as he begins to sow. Where there is evidence of this love, there is ground to hope a saving change has been wrought in the soul.

II. Another fruit of the Spirit is JOY.

A sinful and impenitent state of mind is a sorrowful state. The unbeliever possesses nothing which can satisfy his immortal mind, however successful he may be in his worldly pursuits. He may labor and toil to accumulate a treasure; but he is liable every moment to lose it; and he is conscious that, when obtained, it can afford him none of that consolation which he needs, as one fast approaching eternal *scenes.* Let an unbeliever survey his earthly treasure, and then look forward to a dying bed; will he see any thing to console him? A gloom at once comes over his mind. He cannot contemplate what he knows to be facts in relation to himself, and be joyful. Let him reflect on his stupid and unbelieving state of mind, on his practical rejection of Christ, and his prayerless life, and then look forward to the day of judgment. Will he, thus viewing things as they are, find any ground for joy? No; he is constrained to banish such reflections as unwelcome intruders destroying all his peace: "The way of transgressors is hard."

Holy joy, such as is felt by angels and the redeemed in heaven, is a fruit of the Spirit. The Christian has joy in his soul—joy in believing—joy in his Savior—joy in his precious promises—joy when engaged in his service—and joy when he contemplates the glory which is to follow. The Savior assured his disciples, and he gives the same assurance to all who take up their cross and follow him, that, however numerous are their sorrows in this world, they shall all be turned into joy, and it shall be such joy as no man can take from them. This joyful frame of mind in the salvation and service of the Lord is peculiar to believers. It is far from enthusiasm—it is rational—and, according to the testimony of God, there is sufficient ground for it. The Savior says to all who have given up the vanities of the world, and enlisted under his banner, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." There is no class of people on earth whether high or low, learned or unlearned, who have reason to be *joyful,* but those who, like Paul, "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." This peculiar people have placed their hopes where they cannot be disappointed. One of the important inquiries, then, to be made by those whose thoughts are turned upon the great subject of religion, is this, have we *joy in believing?* This being a fact, there is evidence of a saving change.

III. Another fruit of the Spirit is PEACE.

As there is no joy to those who spend their time in laying up trea-

sures on the earth, so there can be no peace. The heart of every impenitent sinner is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." But it is not so with the believer. Having escaped the pollutions of this world, and taken refuge in Christ, he has found peace. Before this great change was wrought in his soul, he had ever been prone to strive and contend with his Maker, calling him a hard master. Under the frowns of his righteous Providence, he indulged in murmuring; but being taught by the Spirit, his lofty looks are brought down. He now feels willing, yea, he esteems it his highest privilege, to be in the hands of God. He is reconciled to his character and government, and, believing that he does all things well, he is at peace. If any have not this frame of mind—if they are not reconciled to God, they have not that fruit of the Spirit which is called PEACE, and of course, the Lord Jesus has no delight in them. To indulge a murmuring disposition is certainly to be altogether unlike Christ; and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Of this peace, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, it may be affirmed, further, that it is not only an habitual calmness of soul, which the Savior promised when he said, "My peace I give unto you;" but it is a peaceful deportment towards others. The religion of Jesus, imparted by the Holy Spirit to the soul of any person, produces his lovely image. His excellent spirit is imbibed, influencing that person to be peaceable, and a peacemaker. In almost all churches there are some who, though they make high pretensions to religion, and at times have much zeal, are frequently seen engaged in unhappy contentions with their neighbors. But this is no mark of Christian character. Let professors of religion of this description carefully survey the example of Christ, and they must see that they are very unlike him; for "when he was reviled, he reviled not again." If, then, one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace—peace of conscience and a peaceable disposition—we must conclude that a contentious turn of mind is a dark mark in the case of a professor, and a poor preparation for heaven. The Savior will not delight in those who partake not of his Spirit. He will say to them, "I know you not." He has already said it in his Word.

IV. Another fruit of the Spirit, specified in the text, is LONG-SUFFERING.

All men are naturally inclined to esteem themselves more highly than they ought. This disposition makes them impatient and restless when reproached, and when called to endure any cross. But one of the first lessons which the religion of Jesus teaches, and one of the first-fruits of the renewed heart, is self-denial. In the case of every person, faint must be his evidence of having experienced the great change, unless he can bear with some degree of patience the reproaches of an ungodly world, and the trials and crosses which a righteous Providence brings upon him. The Holy Spirit brings sinners to a sight of the greatness of God, and produces an abiding conviction that his government extends to every event, even to the most minute occurrences; and this leads them to endure long. Let us not lose sight of the example of Christ. Are we not all witnesses that he has been long-suffering to us-ward? But for this, we should not

have seen this Sabbath, nor have been favored with the invaluable privileges we now enjoy. Will not all who partake of his spirit exercise forbearance towards one another? Will they be backward to forgive? Will they harbor ill-will or any feelings towards their brethren or others which will prevent them from falling down on their knees and praying for them? What were the feelings manifested by the Lord of glory, while, in view of the gazing multitude, he endured the tortures of the cross? He prayed for those who cruelly mocked his sufferings, yea, for his murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was the spirit of Christ; and the Holy Spirit leaves an impress of the same heavenly temper on the souls of all who have been born again. The divine requirement is, that "with long-suffering, we forbear one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." All conversions, however remarkable in the first indications of them, which fail of making men, in their tempers, resemble Christ, are of little worth.

V. Another fruit of the Spirit is GENTLENESS.

This is an humble, mild, unassuming, and inoffensive deportment. The real Christian, when looking at his own imperfections, and especially when he takes an impartial survey of his own heart, sees much more to condemn in himself than he can see in others, as he looks on their exterior only. He, therefore, in his feelings, takes a low place, and is ready to esteem others better than himself. Even the apostle Paul spoke of himself as being "less than the least of all saints." My brethren, humility is that which becomes us, for what have we to be proud of? Do we cherish a hope of being in the family of Christ? We must not forget the depths of sin, pollution, and wretchedness from which we have been redeemed. Keeping this in view, we shall be gentle towards all men, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." The Holy Spirit never teaches men to be censorious, but to imitate the gentleness of Christ.

VI. Another fruit of the Spirit is GOODNESS.

The Christian character is not formed by one act, however good, nor by a number of acts performed at long intervals, but by a series of them rendered habitual. "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit." The habits of a Christian are good at home and abroad, in the field and in the work-shop. He is sincere in his professions and declarations, and upright in his intercourse with friends and foes. He acts in the fear of God, and stands in awe of him when temptations arise. His character is made up by a careful attention to numerous things, little as well as great. Religion planted in his soul sweetens all his affections, and makes him appear heavenly-minded. Put the whole together and it is *goodness*. This is a fruit of the Spirit, discerned by seeing the whole man renewed. Most evidently, that temper of mind which will influence us to obey one of God's requirements will influence us to obey them all, as far as we understand them. For this fruit of the Spirit in themselves let all faithfully search, who would found their hope of salvation on their resembling Christ, the King and Head of the church.

VII. Another fruit of the Spirit is FAITH.

By this is meant confidence in God—in his testimony—in his promises, and an entire resting of the soul on Christ for pardon and salvation. In the exercise of faith, the new-born soul discovers his own ruined and helpless condition, and the all-sufficiency of Christ. It is a free, voluntary act. No act of the mind can be more so, and yet it is a fruit of the Spirit. In some favored moment, when the sinner was hearing or reading the word of God, or meditating on his lost condition, and perhaps ready to despair of help, the blindness caused by sin was removed, and he saw at once the way of escape. He fled for refuge to Christ, and laid hold on the hope set before him. This voluntary act of the convicted sinner, embracing the Gospel with his whole heart, is faith. The evidence of the existence of this faith is *obedience to God*, not merely with respect to a few of his requirements deemed most important, but obedience to him in all those things which constitute the Christian character. My brethren, are you conscious of having found this refuge, this anchor to your souls? When you think of the guilt and ruin which you brought upon yourselves, and contemplate the great salvation, is Christ all in all to you? Could you have the least hope of pardon, without full confidence in the mediation, righteousness, and intercession of Christ? If you believe the testimony of God respecting Christ, and truly feel that he is just what you need, and all you need, as sinners, and cheerfully cast yourselves upon him, you may have hope of salvation. You may be comforted—you *are* comforted. It cannot be otherwise, if you believe what God has said, and do, in fact, feel and act accordingly.

Some appear to have a trembling hope that they are running the Christian race, and yet are so full of doubts as to run uncertainly. They have little comfort, because they have little evidence and great weakness of faith. This is their own fault. Supposing they are Christians, all their darkness and doubts must arise from their own unfaithfulness to their souls. The path to heaven is drawn by the Holy Spirit with great clearness, and so is the path to endless wo. Let any person take up the Bible, and carefully attend to the marks of a Christian, and the marks of an impenitent sinner, and then impartially look at himself, and examine his conduct and feelings; he need not be at a loss with respect to his real character. My brethren, we may know enough of ourselves to decide where our treasure is. If it is in heaven, our hearts are there; if on the earth, our hearts are here. What we love most invariably has the most of our thoughts, and is made the greatest account of in our feelings and plans, and this very object is our *treasure*. If this object be Christ and his kingdom, we have true faith—that faith which works by love, and which is a fruit of the Spirit. We have been changed from nature to grace. This is a wonderful change, a transforming change, called in the Scriptures *a new creation*. It is never effected by the power, or might, or eloquence of man, but by the Spirit of God; and yet all who have been thus transformed have been perfectly free and voluntary from the first of their convictions until they have found themselves rejoicing in hope. They have exercised faith, and yet their

faith was the gift of God. The all-penetrating eye of Jesus Christ discerns, this moment, the state of each of our souls, and if we cordially accept his righteousness, he owns us as his disciples.

VIII. Another fruit of the Spirit is MEEKNESS.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "I beseech you by the *meekness* of Christ." This temper of mind produced by the Spirit is in opposition to pride and self-confidence. Here again all true Christians resemble Christ; and if any who pretend to be his followers have not the resemblance, they deserve not the name of Christians. Christ was "meek and lowly in heart," and calm under the most injurious treatment;—and he calls upon us to look at his example and copy it. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and when he was mocked, and tortured, and spit upon, not a frowning word did he utter. Was not this exhibition of feelings made by Christ, when his enemies were venting their rage and malice against him, *totally* different from what we ever see in depraved man? This was meekness; and all who have been born of the Spirit exercise themselves to be like him. This lovely image of Christ, developed in the life and character, is a genuine fruit of the Spirit. While unrenewed, we resemble *tigers* in our dispositions; but we must be changed, and become like *lambs* in our tempers.

IX. Another fruit of the Spirit is TEMPERANCE.

My brethren, we all are naturally inclined to self-indulgence, and to an intemperate use of the good things of common Providence; but self-indulgence wars against the soul. With respect to this point, many are strangely blinded and strangely inconsistent. They presume to cherish a hope of being in a pardoned state, and that they are running the Christian race, and yet, though they do not wholly give up themselves to intemperance, it must be said of them, they are *bordering* upon it. They venture quite too far in indulging their sinful propensities. They conform to the company into which they fall, and to the customs of the place where they live. In this way, they not only destroy their own peace, but endanger the souls of others. The impenitent are always watching for something to countenance them in those who profess to be on their way to the heavenly world. Here, then, let all who indulge the hope of having been renewed solemnly pause, and examine the fruit which they bear. Does not the word of God represent the bodies of Christians to be "temples of the Holy Ghost?" If any, then, cherish the hope of being Christians, they should keep their bodies pure, lest the Holy Spirit be grieved away from them. Will the blessed Comforter take up his abode in a body which is polluted with intemperance, or any sin habitually indulged? Would we retain the Holy Spirit, we must abstain from every sin. What if this should occasion a severe conflict, and call for much prayer and watchfulness? The struggle will be an important one, and the victory certain and glorious, if we only rely on the arm of Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Doubtless some who have long addicted themselves to ruinous habits will have to cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye; but they had better do that than lose their souls; better do that than dishonor the Savior. I have now touched upon a subject

on which much light has been shed within a few years. To persist in self-indulgence, in opposition to all this light, must be far more criminal than would have been the case a few years ago, and stronger evidence of not being reconciled to God. The Holy Scriptures do assure us, that *temperance* is one of the fruits of the Spirit: and this fruit must be seen in old professors of religion, and in young converts; or their souls, it is to be feared, are not yet washed in the blood of the Lamb.

We have now seen what is the fruit of the spirit, as stated by the apostle in the text. This fruit has been exhibited, as it appears in the *lives* of those who have been renewed, in a variety of Christian acts and Christian duties. Let us bear this fruit, and we shall have evidence that we have "passed from death unto life." We shall not want for a good hope to cheer us on our pilgrimage, for we shall carry with us the evidence on which the Christian hope must be founded. The Spirit itself will witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Let us do the things comprised in the fruit of the Spirit, and be in heart and life like Christ, and we shall have *peace* and *joy*, such as the world cannot take from us. "Against these there is no law;" because they are exactly what the Divine law *requires* of us. Though fully convicted of having been *vile transgressors*, and of being even *now* awfully deficient in feelings and practice, yet we are on the side of the law, and have embraced Christ, the great Mediator, who is to us "the end of the law for righteousness." Standing on this ground, we need not fear the condemning *sentence* of the law. We may hope; we may have joy and peace in believing.

The course of life marked out in this discourse, if entered upon and persisted in, will bring us back from our shameful revolt from God. Indeed, the *design* of the covenant of grace is to recover in man that holy image of God which he lost in the apostacy. Who can think of being fitted for such a holy place as heaven, unless this image is restored to them, and reflected from their souls? Notwithstanding the fulness of the atonement, will any who are not freed from the love and dominion of sin enter those blissful regions? It would be impossible. Nothing that defileth or worketh abomination will enter there.

Christian brethren, you cannot have listened to the views which have been expressed of the fruit of the Spirit without feeling that you have taken an important stand in this world, by declaring yourselves the friends and followers of Christ. You are under the strongest obligations to exhibit in your lives the fruit of the Spirit. The world has reason to expect it of you. How many are looking to you for an example of purity of life, soundness in the faith, and devotedness to Christ? No Christian ever lived in a more interesting crisis. "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." See that you let not down the hand of prayer—and cease not to pray for those who are out of the kingdom, that they perish not through unbelief. Improve your opportunities for prayer, for they will not always continue. Humbly intercede that the fruits of the Spirit may be seen in the lives of all your acquaintance. Pray for the conversion of a revolted world.

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SERMON CXXIX.

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THE LAW NOT REPEALED BY THE GOSPEL.

Romans, iii. 31.—*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.*

The sentiment that the obligations of the law are removed, or at least lowered by the gospel, is directly adapted to destroy the influence of truth and bring the Christian system into contempt. It would seem to be a dictate of common sense, that any overtures from God could never annihilate or lessen obligations on the part of men, which grow out of relations that in their nature are immutable. Indeed it is difficult to see how it would be just or right to release men from such obligations. But absurd and irrational as this sentiment is, there is no error more common. What numbers are resting in sin with apparent contentment in the hope of salvation suspended solely on the fact that *Christ has died for sinners?* Either from an unwillingness to look at the subject seriously, or from an anxiety to obtain countenance in their sinful course, they embrace a sentiment which the apostle in these words rejects with indignation. To expose the absurdity of this sentiment is to guard sinners against one of the most fatal snares laid for their destruction. The consequences of a scheme that holds up the mercy of God at the expense of his other attributes cannot be otherwise than fearful. The text, viewed in its connexion, justifies the following doctrine:

Such as embrace the gospel with correct views must believe in the unceasing obligations of the law.

I. *This, as appears from the context, was evidently the fact with the apostle.* In the 19th verse of the chapter containing the text he says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." "All the world" could not be guilty before God unless the obligations of the law were still in force. It is not only plain that the law of which the apostle is speaking in this passage is not the Jewish system of rites and ceremonies, as some suppose; but that its obligations will never cease, at least till the day of final retribution. In the conclusion to which he is brought at the close of the chapter, he is perfectly

explicit. It would seem that he had been accused, from the views which he had given of the atonement, of denying his obligations any longer to obey the law; and viewing it as designed to have directly the opposite effect, and feeling that he had sufficiently shown it by his reasoning, he replied to the accusation with spirit, "God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

II. The truth of our doctrine will be manifest if we consider *the nature of the law.* The obligations of the law, like the relations out of which they grow, are in their nature imperishable. The relations which we sustain to God, such as that we are dependent on him for existence, will continue unimpaired by change or circumstances, and of course the obligations which grow out of them must be equally perpetual.

The *principles imbodied in the law are those of universal equity and justice.* In the opinion of some the law is arbitrary, and had no existence till it was proclaimed from Sinai. To such there appears no evidence of its equity only that it was given by a just God. But it will be seen, from the conduct it demands, to acknowledge and secure the rights of every being in the universe. The demand that we should love God with *all* the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, admits the principle that every being is to be regarded according to his worth or importance in the scale of existence. Every command or prohibition proclaimed previous to the giving of the decalogue involved the same principle as the law. The substance of all the other revelations concerning the duty of man are imbodied in the law in the briefest form. The scenes which were witnessed on Mount Sinai were well calculated to show the holiness and importance of these principles; and the fact that they were engraven upon stone seems equally fitted to indicate their durability.

These principles need only to be obeyed to produce universal peace and harmony. All occasions for contention would be for ever prevented. There is nothing in these principles that is local, or that has any peculiar adaptation to this world. If the planets are inhabited, their population must sustain the same relation to their Creator as ourselves; and conformity to these principles will produce results as important for them as for us.

The law is such as to exhibit much of the character of God. Men who are at the head of earthly governments are sometimes compelled to announce laws with which themselves are not pleased. They are under the necessity of doing this frequently in order to be popular, and sometimes when they are monarchs only in name and not in authority. But the great Jehovah needs no power but his own to maintain his government. Infinitely above every thing like human policy, his laws are the free and unrestrained expression of his will. We see in the equity and justice of these principles the moral character of his heart. They give us also a perfect standard by which we may determine the character of our own. It takes notice of the feelings, and of every thing sustaining moral character. Other laws can have reference only to the external conduct, for this plain reason, that those who make them know nothing of the heart only as it is seen in the external conduct; but the law of God extends its demands to the heart, and is of itself evidence that he is acquainted with all its feelings and desires. We may cherish designs the most iniquitous, unknown to our fellow-creatures, and unregarded by human laws; but however secret the workings of the heart may be, they are all known to God, and approved or condemned by his law.

This law is limited in its requirements to the capacities of men. It presents not only a scale of obligation which is perfectly equitable, but it asks for no obedience which is not within the reach of man's capacity. There is an impression on the minds of the great mass of men, which has been cherished from childhood, that what God has required in his law is as much beyond their powers as to see a spirit or create a world. This inability is pleaded as an excuse for their neglect of duty and continuance in the road to death. It is doubtful whether among all the apologies that depravity has invented there is one to which so many resort, and on which they depend with so much confidence for justification as this. It is usually the first and the last weapon of defence that is wrested from the hands of the sinner when he submits to the terms of life. Now there is a depravity in this plea, aside from the charge of injustice which it fixes upon the Lawgiver, which is not a little surprising. Were nothing said on the subject of man's capacity in the terms of the law, we might safely infer that if God be holy and just, he will not require impossibilities. But since the subject is so explicitly stated in the terms of the law, since our obligation is so expressly limited to our powers, this plea must be seen to contain a compound of whatever is daring and hateful in the sight of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Now the plea that we are unable to obey this command will be seen at once to involve a contradiction. It is to contend that we are *unable* to do what we *can.* If sinners have no ability to love God, they are under no obligations to do it according to the terms of the law. If by the apostacy of Adam his posterity have lost their power to obey, the same inference must follow beyond a possibility of evasion. The law is an exhibition of principles which the reason and common sense of men cannot but see are equitable and just. Taking the decalogue as containing the substance of all that God has revealed to govern the conduct of men, and as designed to exhibit distinctly the moral character of his government, it is plain that we may with the same plausibility contend that the overtures of the gospel change the *nature* of equity and justice, as that they affect the obligations of the law.

III. *The gospel would cease to be an exhibition of mercy or grace if the obligations of the law are not perpetual.* It is a dictate of common sense, that every law for the government of moral beings that has obligations has penalties also, and that they are inseparably connected. If we are no longer under obligations to do what the law requires, it has no longer a penalty against us, and of course there can be no mercy in shielding us from its demands. If it were once our duty to love God, it was then mercy to pardon, on our repentance, our neglect of it; but if we are not now justly deserving of punishment for neglecting it, for God to withhold punishment is no mercy. It is no mercy to be saved from what we do not justly deserve. If the requirements of the law are not at this moment obligatory on the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven, there is no grace in their salvation. The demands of the law previous to the death of Christ, in the order of nature, were either just or unjust. If they were just, no compassion on the part of God can lessen or annihilate them. If they were unjust, to violate them was no guilt, and to pardon such violations no mercy. It must be evident

that the existence of mercy or grace is dependent on the perpetuity of the obligations of the law.

IV. *It would be manifestly unjust for God to release men from the obligations of his law.* According to the views of some, it would be right for God to dispose of his law in any way, even to annihilate its obligations. They suppose that no complaint could be made, because it is *his* law. He has "a right to do what he will with his own."

To see the absurdity of these views, let it be asked whether it would be just for a parent to release his children from all obligations to love and respect him if it were within his power? In what way could mankind receive a greater injury than to be released from all obligation to love God and each other? Suppose that by a voice from heaven God should proclaim liberty to men to profane his name and his holy Sabbath, and despise every means by which his fear and love are promoted? Suppose he should give them license to treat the life, liberty, and rights of every being but themselves with perfect disregard? Such would be the consequences were the obligations of the law annihilated: and there are men so blind and inconsiderate as to deem such a liberty desirable. But there is no way within the limits of finite conception in which he would be doing his own kingdom greater injustice. Were he infinitely malevolent, and did he wish to pour out all his wrath on the creatures he had made; did he look forward and adopt measures with a view to their future and irremediable wretchedness, we cannot conceive of any better adapted to his purpose. The picture is still worse, and the supposition still more painful, if we suppose all this has been done by the sufferings and death of Christ. Nothing can be more evident than that men know not what they say, when they affirm that the obligations of the law are lowered or absolved by the gospel.

V. *We cannot receive the Lord Jesus Christ with correct views unless we assent to the estimate that God has placed upon his own law.* To embrace the gospel or believe on Christ does not consist in being willing to be saved by him from deserved punishment without regard to his character or government. The apostle in the context says, that the object for which Christ was set forth to be a propitiation was, "that he might declare the righteousness of God, so that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth." Now it is plain that faith must sustain what God has said concerning "his righteousness," or it would not make it just for him to justify the believing sinner. In what way could God have shown a higher regard for his righteousness or his law than in consenting to such a sacrifice as the death of his Son, rather than that its demands should not be sustained? A reference to transactions which are common among men will show the bearing that faith has to make it just for God to justify the sinner. When a man is arrested for some flagrant violation of law and delivered into the hands of justice, do we not learn the estimation in which the law is held by the extent of the punishment inflicted. If the sentence should be death, or imprisonment for life, the most ignorant could understand that the law which was broken was considered essential to the existence and peace of the government. Viewing the subject in this light, we may see with clearness the estimate that God has placed upon his law. It is true that in relation to the sufferings of Christ, it was not

a sentence inflicted upon the criminal, but upon one who had voluntarily taken his place; and we are sure that in order to make the offence in the criminal pardonable, the evil inflicted on the substitute would not be greater than the criminal deserved. In the case above stated, if the sentence were a heavy fine, and if while the criminal is held for security, a friend is kind enough on certain conditions to pay the debt and secure his discharge, a willingness in the criminal to accept of the interference would be an unequivocal acceptance of the conditions. If his friend alleges openly that he considers the decision of the court just and righteous, and with the understanding that the criminal shall cheerfully acknowledge it to be such, he will interfere, it is plain if he accepts of the kindness of his friend, he not only admits the fine to be just, but he admits the law to be as important as the penalty would indicate. Equally plain is it that if we accept of the atonement of Christ, we admit the infinite value of the law that his sufferings and death would intimate. Now what could be more absurd than for this criminal, when he had accepted the interference of his friend, and the fine had been paid, to contend that he was now at liberty to violate that law as often as he pleased? Could he infer that the law or its obligations were annihilated merely because the government had once shown how highly it was valued? Still more absurd would it have been, if the government had made his acceptance of the terms stated by his friend a condition of his release, for him to contend that he might now repeat his crime with impunity. He had, in the most definite manner possible, admitted the importance of the law. It is similar with us if we exercise evangelical faith in Christ. By that act we admit the law to be as important and sin to be as deserving of punishment as the offering of Christ would show. Now when we have made this concession, can we be so absurd as to say in the same breath that the law is no longer obligatory?

VI. Another argument in support of our proposition may be drawn from the fact, *that from the uniform usage of the Holy Spirit, sinners are not admitted to feel that they are at peace with God till they can cordially justify the obligations and penalties of the law.* The scribe that came to our Savior with the question, "Which is the first commandment of all?" who so readily acceded to the views given of the law, was told by the Savior, "when he saw that he answered discreetly," "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." It would seem, from this declaration, that a cordial and unreserved admission of the obligations and penalties of the law could flow only from the spirit and temper of that kingdom. Not only so, but it is obvious from the nature of things that where such a spirit or temper finds a welcome reception, that heart is fitted for the worship and enjoyment of God in that purer and holier world. In perfect accordance with this have been the experience and observation of every man who has watched the operation of the Spirit. They have seen men at the commencement of that work manifesting the bitterest opposition to the law, openly alleging that a being of equity and justice could not insist upon such claims; and they have invariably found that such men obtained no satisfactory and lasting peace till they could bow submissively and cheerfully to the extent of its demands. It is admitted that sinners, when partially alarmed, and often before they come to the point of justifying the law, from wrong instruction or the deception of their own hearts, embrace a hope. For a while they may rejoice exceedingly in view of

the mercy of God; but their piety infallibly proves like the "morning cloud and the early dew." As they are never slain by the law, so they were never made alive by Jesus Christ. This is doubtless one important reason why the effects of some revivals are temporary and unsatisfactory. The law is not presented with sufficient clearness and faithfulness; and sinners, although they may be alarmed and convinced of their danger, are not convicted of their *guilt*. But where the mind is brought, through the influences of the Spirit, to such a sense of guilt that it feels, and cheerfully and cordially admits, the sentence of the law to be just, it yields the contest, and receives a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. When sinners are brought to this point, however severe their convictions have been, the contest is ended. By a usage that is uniform of this kind, the great Jehovah lets his creatures know that he is determined to maintain the spirit of his law. And it must be evident, upon a moment's reflection, that he can do no less, so long as he is determined to defend the honor of his character and government.

In view of this subject we see,

1. The importance of ascertaining *what is the penalty of the law*. If the gospel supports the entire demands of the law by declaring the righteousness of God, and if faith be indispensable to justification, to all the impenitent and unbelieving this inquiry becomes one of fearful import. To evade the discussion because it fills us with painful forebodings is to betray our own immortal interests. "He that believeth not is condemned already." The question before us refers to nothing less than the extent of this condemnation. What then are the demands of justice or the law of God against impenitent and unbelieving sinners? In the answer to this question, reason and revelation perfectly agree. The train of thought by which we shall be led to a view of the testimony of both is plain and brief. It is a principle universally admitted, that the penalty of justice for the violation of a law is in exact proportion to its importance; and that the importance of a law is determined by the importance of the interests it is designed to secure. It is on this principle that the penalty of some laws is capital punishment, or imprisonment for life, while that of others is only a moderate fine. If some friend of yours had been barbarously murdered, and the jury had found the evidence against the murderer clear and decisive, and there was laid upon him a sentence only of an hour's imprisonment, would you not be shocked at the absurdity and injustice of such a sentence? Who would not see that if the violations of laws for the security of life were to be treated in this manner none would be safe? Who would not escape from such a government? Who would wish to live where his life would be estimated at no higher value? On the other hand; suppose your friend, by some indiscretion, had injured the property of his neighbor to a small amount, and the jury on his trial had decided that he should be imprisoned for life—under such a valuation of law you would consider yourself equally unsafe. Is not the rule by which the penalty of laws is to be determined, from these remarks, sufficiently plain? The penalty in order to be just, from the value of things, must be in proportion to the importance of the law. Now let us look for a moment at the importance of the law of God. It supports the broad principle that every being has rights according to his worth in the scale of existence. On this principle it requires us to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. Suppose this law should be brought into contempt throughout the empire of God (as

this is the direct tendency of every sin), what would be the effects? What would be the consequences were all its obligations annihilated? All holiness, justice, and equity, and of course all peace and happiness, would be blotted from existence. The character of God would be covered with an indelible stain, and his government would sink under everlasting disgrace. If the principles on which his government and his happiness are founded were annihilated, or if God had not power to maintain his law and his government, nothing could be safe in families, communities, or nations. There would be one unmingled scene of misrule and wretchedness over the whole field of creation, and the powers of darkness would shout one long and horrible note of triumph. Now what penalty will be in proportion to the importance of this law? Every violation of the law may be charged with the destruction of the principles of equity and holiness, and the government of God. The sinner that refuses to love God says to the universe by his example, that the command of God is unjust, that selfishness and neglect of God ought to prevail in the bosom of every moral being. It is nothing to his praise that this spirit is not universal. Now what penalty can we suppose sufficient to express the hatred of God towards such sin? Is it natural death? This, according to the opinion of many, is the penalty of the law. But is this an evil to be compared with the ruin of the law? Others suppose that the curse of the law is spiritual death, by which they mean to be *dead in sin*. This, aside from its consequences, is the sinner's crime; and we may as well suppose that cause and effect are the same, as that the sinner's crime and his punishment are the same. Spiritual death, aside from its consequences, is that in which his spirit of enmity delights. And is it rational to think that the resentment of the great Jehovah towards the violation of his law may be shown without displeasing the sinner? Others imagine that the penalty of the law is a limited period of punishment in hell. But what period can be named which, as an evil, will bear any comparison with the ruin of the law? Take the longest period supposed by these men to be intended by the phrases "ages of ages," or "everlasting," and what is it when compared with the evil at which sin aims? It is far less, and the punishment would be more disproportioned to the crime than the sentence of an hour's imprisonment for wilful murder. If the sinner were to decide upon this question with himself out of view—if he were to look at the equity and importance of the law, and his own case were not concerned in the decision, he would say, without hesitation, that for the violations of it, nothing short of endless death would be an adequate expression of divine disapprobation.

Our next inquiry is for the testimony of Scripture; for after all our reasonings, every question of this kind must be referred to the Bible. The Law giver is manifestly better acquainted with the importance of his law, and the penalties which are requisite to guard it, than his creatures; and a reference to the Scriptures will show us that he has not been backward in giving his decision. The proper course for us is to endeavor to ascertain his decision, as the views of criminals are of little weight in deciding their own characters or desert of punishment. It would seem that the Scriptures are sufficiently explicit on this subject. We may obtain an answer to the question before us in few words. "The wages of sin is death." In order to show what kind of death is intended, it is placed in direct opposition to everlasting life—"but the gift of God is eternal life." I am aware that there

is much pains taken to show that the terms "everlasting," "eternal," and the like, as used in the Bible do not mean *endless*. But let me ask, what would be the opinion of a being from some other world, one who is not personally interested in the decision, after acquainting himself with our language, should he set himself to decide this question from the terms that are used in the Bible? Let a man go to the Bible as an honest citizen to a law that has just been penned, to find out what the legislators *did* rather than what they *should* mean. Let him read that the wicked "shall be punished with everlasting destruction"—that they "shall go away into everlasting punishment"—that "their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched"—that they "shall be destroyed"—that they "shall be destroyed without remedy"—that their hope shall perish—that they "shall utterly perish"—that they shall not be forgiven either in this world or that which is to come. Now what must be his conclusion from an examination of phrases of this kind, if he honestly desired to know the mind of God—*there* cannot be a remaining doubt. If any thing less than endless punishment be the "wages of sin," the Bible, on this subject, will mislead the honest reader. Further, when the Scriptures speak of the "love of God," and the "mercy of God," it would be considered as being both absurd and impious to assert that any thing less than infinite *love* and *mercy* were intended. What then must be the meaning of such phrases as the "wrath of God," and the "anger of God?" Besides, regeneration is represented as essential to salvation, and as being effected only by the Holy Spirit. But there is not the slightest hint in the Bible that the Spirit will strive with sinners for their conviction and conversion in the future world. Painful as the truth may be to the mind of the impenitent sinner, there is every variety of expression and every kind of metaphor used in the Bible to show that the penalty of the law can be nothing less than everlasting death.

2. *It is plain from this subject that the penalty of the law is no arbitrary appointment of the Almighty.* Some are convinced that the doctrine of endless punishment is taught in the Scriptures, who yet feel that it is hard and unjust, and that it is supported by the mere sovereignty of the Almighty. We have seen, however, that the law depends on relations as imperishable as the nature of things, and that upon every principle by which we estimate the desert of crime among men, the penalty of sin must be everlasting death. The sinner, it is true, does not accomplish an evil equal to such a penalty; but the criminality of men is not measured by their power or success in the work of evil. It is a principle universally admitted, that criminality is to be predicated wholly on the *intention* or *design*. Is the man who endeavors to steal your property, and by being discovered is prevented, as guilty as though he had succeeded? Is the man who designs to burn your house, and destroy your life, and the lives of your family, and is prevented, as criminal as if he had effected his purpose? Does the man who endeavors to overturn the government, and is defeated, deserve to be treated as though he were successful?—then is the sinner who breaks the least of God's commands and teaches men so, guilty of the whole;—then is the man who heeds not the authority of God—who profanes his name or his holy Sabbath—or refuses to give his whole heart to God, as guilty as though he had effected the ruin of the law. No thanks to him that his spirit does not prevail in the bosom of every dependent moral being. It is the spirit with which he is pleased, and to which he has given all the influence of his own example. Sinners have shown what

they would be willing to do, had they the power, when they put the crown of thorns upon the Savior's head. They would cast contempt, everlasting contempt, on his name, and character, and errand into the world. I do not mean simply the men that crucified him, nor the vilest and bitterest of his enemies at the present day. The statement is true in reference to the most moral among the impenitent. By refusing to accept of him as their Savior, they say that he is not to be compared with the world as an object of affection—that he has wholly mistaken their case, for they stand in no need of any righteousness but their own—that they have some excuse for violating the law which entirely removes their desert of blame. This is said by every sinner in a manner to exert the greatest influence; for in no way can a man show so certainly the feelings of his heart as by his example. If the character of our Lord, and his design in giving himself a sacrifice for sin, were to be estimated according to the treatment he receives from sinners, what could be more odious, or less deserving our attention? Indeed if the sinner could have his desires in relation to the character and government of God gratified, holiness would be banished from the universe. Now if sinners are to be viewed according to their desires, does not sin, from a principle uniformly admitted, and from the nature of things, deserve everlasting death?

3. *This subject shows that no minister can fulfil his duty as "a messenger of the Lord of Hosts" without frequently and faithfully preaching the law, with all its obligations and penalties.* What can be more vain than to imagine that sinners may be persuaded to repent before they are sensible that they are guilty? It is impossible. Of what will they repent till they are convinced that they are sinners? If the law be, as we have shown it to be, the standard by which God will determine the character of all moral beings, is it not impossible that men should know their own character, and equally impossible that they should be induced to repent, or possess any just views of the grace manifested if they should receive pardon, till they have some proper views of the law? It is seriously feared that on this point the preaching of many who are regarded as zealous and faithful at the present day is extremely defective. Carefully look at the multitudes that occupy our houses and throng our streets, ascertain their views and feelings on this subject, and how little will you find them acquainted with the depravity of their hearts? Do they act at all under the impression that they are responsible to God? and that their character and destiny are to be determined by his holy and just law? Could it be inferred from their conduct that they felt themselves under a law that regarded every sinful feeling as exposing them to the penalty of everlasting death? Now if God be just, and if the iniquities of men "*will find them out*," should not every measure be taken to show them their sins while they may repent and obtain pardon? Till men are made acquainted with the law, they will remain ignorant both of the number and character of their sins. And what is it but cruelty to conceal from them the fact, that for those sins over which they sleep as quietly as though nothing were at stake, unless they repent, and the guilt is cancelled in a Savior's blood, the interests of holiness and heaven will demand their eternal death. Let sinners be convinced of their guilt, and that God will call them to account, and there is some hope that, by presenting Christ before them, they may be persuaded to turn and live; but so long as they are blind to these facts, there is no hope in their case.

It is important also for the people of God frequently to contemplate the

claims and penalties of the law. We can form a far better opinion of the character of our hearts from our feelings towards the law than from our feelings towards the gospel. Let the gospel be proclaimed in a loose and indefinite manner—as it is proclaimed when its conditions are kept out of sight, and it is represented as in opposition to the law—and it is no evidence that we love God that we are pleased with such a gospel. That man of the world who, to increase his wealth, can trample upon every command of God—that unfeeling miser who, for the same purpose, can grind the faces of the poor—that hardened profligate whose greatest anxiety is to escape detection—that drunkard who reels along the streets—yea, that midnight murderer—indeed any one, however sunk in guilt and abandoned of God, would be pleased with a gospel like this. It was not the exhibition of such a gospel that led Felix to tremble. It was a gospel that derived all its value from just views of the law. Let men be told that the blood of Christ can never be applied to any but such as love the law and justify its obligations and penalties, and none but good men, such as Paul, will be pleased.

4. If we have taken a correct view of the law, *how fearfully important is the present life.* Every view we have taken of the law indicates that this life is a state of trial, and that the state of retribution to which it points is interminable. This life, when compared with eternity, is but a point; and upon this point are suspended all the future interests of the soul. The shortness and uncertainty of time have led many to doubt whether such immense interests are depending on it as the Scriptures represent. But this objection is far more specious than solid. Where is the sinner who does not decide, short as his time on earth may be, whether he will submit to God? Wherein would his condition be amended by a longer life or a longer time of trial? Do men lose their alienation of heart as they advance in life? Does their opposition to holiness and heaven wear out with their years? Neither can the uncertainty of life be viewed as an objection of any weight. On this question also we may appeal to facts. Are men more solicitous to secure the favor of God under the impression that life is secure, or under the feeling that it is uncertain? The mere statement of this question is a sufficient answer. The providence of God will be found to be just and holy. It will be seen that it was not for want of opportunity, my hearers, if you continue to neglect the great salvation and sink for ever under the penalty of the law. That interests so extensive and overwhelming should be suspended upon a single point is a plain indication that the whole plan had its origin in the wisdom of God. Impenitent sinners will feel, when they look at the equity of God's law, that the trial with them is a fair one, and that when they are condemned no injustice is done them. But with the saints the magnitude of the danger to which they are exposed will greatly and eternally increase their admiration of the mercy by which they were saved.

5. If the view we have taken of the law be correct, *how great is the mercy of God in the gift of his Son!* The extent of mercy and compassion in the provisions of the gospel is just equal to our demerit according to the decision of his law. He could not give up his law—that would have been a greater sacrifice than to have suffered this whole world to have sunk under its penalty. He has made a declaration of his righteousness which will sustain its holy and equitable claims; while all such as repent and do him the honor to trust in his word may be saved with an everlasting salvation.

6. From the view we have taken of the law, *how great will be the mercy of God towards such as are finally pardoned and received to his favor!* What a theme will the gospel system be to employ their meditations! The more they discover of the purity of the law and the reasonableness of its claims, the more they will see of their personal desert of punishment. They will discover more and more clearly that God has not suffered his Son to pour out his soul unto death to wash away offences of a trifling turpitude. The light of eternity will show that God is not dealing in unreal and unmeaning expressions, when he warns us of the dangerous tendency and guilty character of sin. While it will be seen that sin aimed at nothing less than the ruin of the sinner and the character and government of God, it will be seen also that the blood of Christ has cleansed every believer from the darkest stains. While ages after ages shall roll away, and the plan and extent of divine mercy shall be constantly unfolding, a sense of obligation, and a conception of the greatness of divine grace, will keep pace with the increase of light in the mind of every believer.

7. *How many and how weighty are the motives that urge every sinner to repent, and accept of pardon in the name of Jesus!* Fearful as the penalty of the law is, God has given every assurance that he is determined to execute it. Who among you can dwell with devouring fire? Who among you can dwell with everlasting burnings? If you would not meet the decisions of the judgment-day alone, and support the claims of the law with your own blood, accept the invitations of mercy without delay. Every thing calls upon you to awake. The law and the gospel, the shortness and uncertainty of life, all bid you open your eyes to the interests of your souls. What is it that you gain by crowding the subject from your minds, and heedlessly braving the threatenings of God. Consider what prevents you from repenting this moment, and think how it must appear when you shall look back upon it from the bar of judgment. Is it the urgency of your temporal concerns? A faithful attention to those interests need not hinder your repentance a moment. And if it did, what is your wealth, which you must soon leave, contrasted with the life or death of your immortal spirit? Is it your friends? Are you afraid of a sneer? Without repentance the soul is lost; and would you ever, while the recollection should exist, forgive yourself for venturing everlasting death for such a cause as this? Do you say that you do not know whether these things are true? Is it not time that you did know? The Bible was put into your hands that you might learn and feel the power of its evidence, that it is the word of God.

Do you plead the old and impious excuse that you are unable to repent? Will you dare to tell the Judge when you shall meet him at his bar "that he is a hard master?" Do you say that you will think of it to-morrow? God says, "*to-day*;" and *he may say*, "thou fool, *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee." Your heart says, *to-morrow*, and the enemy of your souls says, *to-morrow;* but the voice of Jehovah and of your own conscience is, "Now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." Which will you obey? It is time to look at this subject with seriousness. Does not the gospel bear every mark of being God's method of saving sinners, while it supports the law that condemns them? Has he sent his Son to die for you when your sins did not endanger you? Has he sent him to die that he might justify or save you in your sins? Will you neither believe what God hath said, nor what he hath done? Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?

SERMON CXXX.

BY SYLVESTER HOLMES,

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THE MEASURE OF THE SINNER'S DUTY.

II Corinthians, viii. 12.—*For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

This passage has primary, if not exclusive reference, to contributions made for the poor saints of Judea and other places. To give a new impulse to the liberality of the Corinthians, Paul told them what had been done by the churches of Macedonia. Lest the spirit of emulation, which was so prominent at Corinth, should be improperly awakened by what he had said, a rule of duty was given in the words of the text. Offerings made, with a willing mind, according to the ability of the giver, will be accepted without reference to other churches or individuals.

If the duty of man is to be regulated by his ability, in his religious charities, then duty and moral obligation in all cases must be determined by the same rule. The passage suggests the idea that,

The duty of man can never exceed his ability to perform.

A man may be criminal for his inability, but he never can be criminal for not doing that which is beyond his present ability. The man who, by prodigality, has wasted his estate, is criminal, and highly so; but when it is gone, he is no more criminal for not giving liberally, than if his estate had been buried in the ruins of an earthquake. The murderer is guilty and condemned for killing his neighbor, but when he is dead, he is no more to blame for not restoring him to life than if he had been killed by the lightning of heaven.

Moral obligation, then, depends on present ability to do the thing required. Acceptable obedience supposes the ability possessed is put forth, under the control of a willing mind, in the performance of duty. Disobedience ever implies existing ability, which is not used for right purposes, because there is not a willing mind.

These remarks illustrate what is intended by that ability on which obligation depends. It is the actual possession of every thing requisite to the performance of duty, and *all* our duty, *if we have a proper disposition of heart.*

In further illustration of the sentiment, I remark:

1. *Nothing can be the duty of man, for the neglect of which he is totally incapable of being made to feel guilt and self-condemnation.* There is in man a moral principle, which is capable of discerning between right and wrong, and charging home guilt for the slightest deviation from the rule of duty. From

various causes this moral principle may be darkened, paralyzed, and silenced; but when freed from embarrassment, as it must be in a future world, it will reproach the transgressor for the least offence. But this reprover, in the clearest light and the most active performance of its duty, cannot be made in this, or any other world, to condemn us for that which we could not have done with a willing mind. To state the argument in few words—there cannot be a neglect of duty without sin; but there is no sin in not doing that for which we have not the requisite natural ability—then that which we cannot perform, and consequently neglect with impunity, *cannot be our duty.*

2. The sentiment under consideration is sustained by the fact, that *man cannot create natural ability.* He ought, indeed, to cultivate and strengthen the talents God has given him; but it never was, and never can be his duty to create powers which God has in a sovereign manner withheld. Men are never commanded to add one cubit to their stature, change the color of their hair, or create for themselves eyes and ears, if born blind and deaf. It would be quite as impossible for man to furnish himself with a faculty of the mind, which he did not receive from the hand of nature, as to supply the lack of any bodily organ. Now, if something more than a disposition is needful to the performance of an action—give it what name you please—call it natural ability, or what you will—if this needful something be not possessed, it cannot be a man's duty to perform an action which requires power, he has not and cannot create.

3. *The reasonableness of the Divine law offers further evidence of the truth suggested by the text.* Admit that which it would be infidelity to deny, that the law of the Lord is perfect, and our position is put among the truths which duration will not change. That the commands of God are just, may be proved by the source from which they come, the nature of the duties they enjoin, and their application to successive generations of men, in the endless variety of circumstances in which they are found. But the justice of a law always supposes the power of obedience in him to whom such law is given. A just law only requires and prohibits those things which grow out of the relations of intelligent beings, and accords with principles which were wholly independent of such law. A deviation from the strictest adherence to these principles would make a law radically defective, let the source be what it might from which it came. It is perfectly clear, then, that a reasonable law measures out the duty of man in exact proportion to his ability, never requiring any *more* nor any *less* than he is able to perform.

4. *The sanctions of the law and the threatenings of God's word* all speak in vindication of the doctrine before us. The Bible never condemns men, nor threatens condemnation except for neglecting that which might have been done, or doing that which might have been avoided. The prospect of heaven is held out to men, not in connexion with impossibilities, but in connexion with those things which they can do with a willing mind. On the other hand condemnation is written against them, for that alone, which they did freely and voluntarily. If God does threaten men with present evils and future destruction, and these threatenings always respect voluntary actions, then every

denunciation of the Scriptures proves that the duty of man never exceeds his powers to obey.

5. In support of the position we have taken, *we have the testimony of the wise and good in all ages, and in a future day every intelligent being will give his assent to its truth.* It has already been shown that no dividing line between right and wrong, but that assumed in the text, could ever commend itself to the understanding and conscience of men, and that no law but one formed on such principles of moral obligation can be holy and good. Then as the wise and good in all ages have approved of the law, and fully justified all God has required of men, it will follow that the duty of man never has exceeded the bounds prescribed in the text, nor has God ever required of man that which he has not given him ability to perform. That of which good men are convinced in this world, all will be convinced of in the world to come, that God condemns only for the neglect of that which they might have done. If the enlightened and free exercise of reason will constrain every rational being to approve of the rule of duty, as perfectly equal and just, then that rule must require precisely what man is capable of performing.

6. *The joys of the righteous in heaven and the sorrows of the impenitent in hell,* go to prove the truth of our doctrine. Let the conviction be removed from the redeemed, that justice without mercy would have assigned them a different place, and their loudest notes of praise would be silenced. On the other hand, the keenest, if not the only pains of the lost in hell, are created by the inwrought and never yielding conviction that they perish for doing that which they were not compelled to do, and neglecting that which they had the power of doing. If the suffering in hell could feel for an hour that mighty *power*, and not undeviating *justice*, put them there, it would be an hour of alleviation. Then it is perfectly plain that fallen angels and wicked men will eternally feel that they are where they ought to be. Who but must see that every note of praise in heaven, and every pain in hell, go to prove that the duty of man is measured by his ability, never imposing any more than he is capable of performing?

Our subject suggests the following inferences:

1. Is the duty of man measured by his ability, then *the entire free agency of man is acknowledged by God in all his dealings with him.* By free agency we understand the power and liberty of following the supreme inclinations of the heart. Such freedom is perfectly consistent with entire dependence—with an unbroken succession of volitions and actions of the same moral character,—and no less consistent with the indispensable connexion between choice and action. As the Bible ever asserts man as thus free, it requires him to do that, and *only* that, which he *can* do with a willing mind.

2. If the duty of man commences and ends with his ability to perform, *then he is able to do every thing God has required of him.* The opinion of natural men is both false and destructive, that they have many pious desires, but are unable to execute them. Men with these views may be alarmed, but they never can be convinced of sin, till they see and feel that the *only* reason

why they have not repented, believed in Christ, loved God supremely, and made themselves a new heart, has been the voluntary choice of their own will. I most sincerely believe in the doctrine of entire dependence, and yet I fear the doctrine is too often stated in a manner to give the sinner wrong views of his difficulty and quiet his conscience. A distinction should here be made which is constantly observed in the government of every family,—I mean a distinction between *ability* to perform a given action and a *disposition* to perform such action. It may be said it is idle to talk of ability where there is not a willing mind:—then it is idle to talk of accountability in an unholy man.

3. *The seat of human depravity* is manifest from our subject. That in man, which chooses his object of supreme affection, and determines and directs his actions, is the seat of his depravity. As the authority and influence of the will are extended to every power of the mind and body, when this is corrupted and alienated, the effects are seen in all over which it presides. The difficulty does not lie in a darkened understanding, and dimness of moral perception, but in a "WILL NOT" in relation to all God has required. The understanding of the sinner will be enlightened, and his conscience made quick and powerful, in hell; but his depravity will remain. It is important that men should know what we mean when we say they are totally depraved. Many objections to this doctrine owe their origin to the indistinct manner of presenting it. If I have a deadly disease about me, let me know its seat and symptoms.

4. It is perfectly manifest from what has been said that *no new powers and faculties are given or needed in regeneration.* If the duty of man is and ever has been limited to his ability, then all he needs or receives in regeneration is a disposition to do what he was always able to do. Grace applies the remedy where the disease holds its empire,—the man is only *made willing* to serve God according to that which he hath, and not according to that which he hath not. We see then why cold speculative reasoning, which goes only to the understanding, will simply put in order the furniture of the head, and why the most eloquent lectures on the beauties of virtue and the deformities of vice, will only make clear the outside of the man. The sharpest arrows of truth must be directed to the very point where the Holy Ghost does his work in regeneration.

5. If the duty of man is limited by his ability to perform, then *the justice of his condemnation is demonstrated.* In this world men may and do find fault when told that they are in danger of future and endless condemnation. Men generally believe their sins few, and a multitude suppose they have done as well as they could. But the truth is, no man has done as well as he could who has not done *all* his duty. This truth will appear most clearly another day. In this world men have a thousand reasons for their impiety, but in another world they will all be resolved into one, when it shall be said, Bring hither mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me. The controversy between God and man will then be stripped of all that ignorance, pride, and sophistry have drawn about it, and be exhibited as it is, directly between the heart and a perfectly holy law.

6. We see that distinguishing mercy is consistent with the impartiality of God and the freedom of man. If God requires of man only what he could do if he would—if the reason why man does not do his duty is wholly in his unwillingness—and if a change of heart consists in simply giving a disposition to do that which all have the natural power of doing,—then the grace of God in giving a disposition to be holy to some and not to all, is free from all the objections which have been urged against it. If grace removed some mighty defect in natural ability, and this was not done for all, then there might be a want of justice in the distinction; but this is not the case. If the conditions of salvation were any thing but what they are, it might be unjust in God *to have mercy on whom he will have mercy.* But as the salvation of man depends on that which is within his reach, if he has a willing mind, let his circumstances be what they may; he has not the shadow of a cause to find fault if left to follow his own inclination down to endless perdition. When he hears the redeemed sing of grace which saved them, he will eternally know that it was grace which he refused. There is no world of which we have any knowledge, where the distinguishing mercy of God is found fault with, but the world in which we live, and surely there is no world where there is less cause. If the understanding and conscience of men governed them rather than their heart, not an objection would be heard to the sovereignty of Divine grace.

7. This subject shows *to all that hear me, that nothing has prevented, and nothing now prevents your salvation but your own heart.* If you came to the house of God destitute of piety, this was the reason—if you go away impenitent, this will be the reason. If you are condemned at last, and perish in hell, this will be the reason. Sinner, what wilt thou, what canst thou say, when God shall deal with thee?

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SERMON CXXXI.

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GOD'S CLAIMS, AND THE SINNER'S IMMEDIATE DUTY.

1 Samuel, xv. 22.—*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.*

The text may be regarded as clearly warranting the sentiment, that *the performance of no external religious duty can merit the Divine approbation, while connected with allowed disobedience to a known and positive requirement.*

The truth of this position, in its application to the impenitent sinner, it is proposed to illustrate in the present discourse. The point of duty to which our attention will be confined, is the immediate compliance, on the part of the sinner, with the terms of salvation. This God authoritatively and unqualifiedly demands: demands of every individual, within the reach of the proclamation of mercy; and until he does yield compliance, not a single external religious duty, which he may perform, can merit the Divine approbation. In the elucidation of the subject it will be necessary to glance for a moment at the positive character of God's claims on this point,—the *amount*, the *reasonableness*, and the *pressing urgency* of what he demands.

The *amount* of what God demands of the sinner, as a condition of salvation, may be expressed in one word, viz: love—*supreme love to God.* This is the fulfilling of the law, and secures

a compliance with the terms of the gospel. Although love is not the only exercise necessary to salvation, still it is the foundation of all the rest. The sinner who loves God will repent of sin, and rest his whole expectation of salvation upon the merits of a once crucified, but risen and reigning Savior. This constitutes a compliance with the terms of mercy—of life. And this is the amount which God demands of every sinner.

The *reasonableness* of this demand is obvious. The claim which God made upon man in innocence, was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This has never been repealed, and is therefore binding upon every child of Adam. The fact that he can never be *justified* by the deeds of the law, having been guilty of transgression, and fallen under the curse, does not prove that the law ceases to hold its claims over the sinner. Nor does the fact, that men have transgressed the divine law free them from obligation to yield obedience, any more than the transgression of human law frees the transgressor from its claims, or gives him a right to disregard it. If, then, God ever demanded the supreme love of his intelligent creatures, he demands it still; and as God demands, so he *deserves* their supreme love. And he deserves it, no less after they have rebelled against him than before. No act of his creatures can ever affect God's character, or make him unworthy their eternal love and gratitude. If, then, God has not repealed his law requiring supreme love, and if rebellion can never free men from their obligations, and if God is still deserving of love, his claim surely is a *reasonable* one.

Such being the amount and reasonableness of what God claims as a condition of salvation; we have only to advert, in one word, to the *pressing urgency* of his claims. "He now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." This exercise implies the existence of every other which is demanded. It is the giving up of the controversy which the sinner is waging with the claims of his Maker. It is a practical acknowledgment that God is *right*, and the sinner *wrong*—totally and entirely wrong—that the whole blame for SIN *is on himself;* for it is the voluntary withholding from God of that which was his *due;*

which he *might*, and which he *ought* to have yielded, and therefore is the violation of obligation, for which he is neither able nor willing to make any excuse, or offer any justification. The language of his prayer is the language of his heart, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* To this point God demands that every sinner should come as a matter of *present* duty, to be performed "now," without a single moment's delay. It cannot be postponed, but at a fearful hazard. Every accent of mercy and of wrath which comes from the throne of the Eternal, is giving force to the impressive affirmation, "NOW is the accepted time; behold! NOW is the day of salvation." Then,

> "Hasten, O sinner, to be blest,
> And stay not for the morrow's sun;
> For fear the curse should thee arrest,
> Before the morrow is begun."

Into this precious hour of mercy, God is pressing concerns of everlasting importance, and calling upon you for a decision, that will take hold on eternal bliss, if you will yield to his demands; but which *may* be connected with the hopeless, ceaseless wailings of the damned, if you refuse! REPENTANCE is your *first* duty. God demands it "NOW." Nothing can be made a substitute for this. The performance of no external religious duties can merit the Divine approbation, while you refuse to come to this point, and repent. This is the point to be illustrated and established.

1. I remark then, in the first place, that the very *character* of such services forbids the idea that God can look upon them with approbation. The individuals in question have transgressed God's law,—have taken up arms of rebellion against their rightful Sovereign, who has offered pardon upon condition of their laying down their weapons, in token of their submission to his authority, and sorrow for their past conduct; but this they *refuse* to do. They are unwilling to make any such concession. They are willing to return to God, if he will permit it, without any allusion to their rebellion, or their guilt,—and without any expressions of sorrow for the past,—and this is a spirit of justi-

fication of their sins, which must draw down the displeasure of a holy God. If the feelings and motives with which an external act is performed, may be justly regarded, as giving *character* to that act; if, on this principle, we should detest an act of outward respect and attachment, which we knew to be accompanied by the very opposite of these feelings;—how must God regard the external acts of religious worship, offered by impenitent men, when the whole current of their feelings is in direct hostility to him and his government? I do not overstate this point. The individuals in question are *sinners*;—sin is a transgression of law—a deliberate and voluntary violation of what was known, or what might have been known, to be obligation. It is therefore rebellion, direct and open. This is the stand against God's government, which every sinner takes; and which he maintains, until, in penitence, he lays down his arms. His acts of professed reverence and worship, then, express the reverence and homage of a *rebel* to his injured Lord; and of one, too, who still refuses submission to that authority against which he has arrayed himself! Is not this insulting God to his very face? Is it not adding mockery to rebellion?—He may *confess* his sins, but he has no penitence for them;—may pray for *pardon*, but why should pardon for rebellion be bestowed upon an individual while that very rebellion is persisted in,—with no repentance for the past? I ask, what must be the character of the pretended prayers, or any of the external religious services of such a man? Does he not carry about with him the spirit and temper which must totally unfit him for any thing, and every thing, which could be considered as really *obeying* God, until his breast is melted down in penitence for his sins? Until he comes to this point, no matter in what his hands or his mouth may be concerned, the wrath of a holy God is over him, and cannot be bribed or averted. He must repent or perish.

2. But it may be remarked again, that these external religious services of impenitent men, *have in their nature no tendency to produce piety*. I am perfectly aware that a different sentiment has been propagated, but I fully believe it to be false in fact, and most fatally ruinous in its consequences. Look, dear hearers,

for one moment, at this subject. The external religious services of wicked men are sinful,—they are a solemn mockery in the very presence of a holy God! Is there any tendency in such acts to produce holiness?—any tendency in sin to produce real love to God? And if so, how strong is this tendency? Is it at all proportioned to the heinousness, the turpitude of the act? We all feel justified in detesting the conduct and character of that man who comes to us under the guise of respect and friendship, when we know that his professions are lip-service merely, and in direct opposition to the feelings of his heart. The greater the profession, the more barefaced would be the hypocrisy, and the more abominable the conduct of that individual in our estimation, until his feelings should be made to correspond with what he professed. It is upon this very principle that we hear God asserting in his word, that "the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." He had required sacrifices to be offered under the former dispensation, but he had never given any encouragement to the supposition that either that or any other duty could be performed to his acceptance with an impenitent heart. The sacrifices of the former dispensation were acts of religious worship, and were designed to answer the same general object that is designed by the religious duties of the Christian under our own more favored dispensation. In this view of the subject, listen again to the declaration from heaven—"The *sacrifices* of the wicked are," not merely sinful, but "an ABOMINATION to the Lord." I would that this solemn truth might ring in the ear of every impenitent man in Christendom, until he should be driven from his refuge of lies to seek shelter in the ark of safety. And I ask, how great can be the tendency in the external religious services of impenitent men to produce piety, when they are an *abomination* in the sight of God? Were there any tendency to such a result, it is obvious that the longer a person should continue to resist God's claims to repent, the nearer to holiness he would approximate, provided merely his hands and his lips were moved as God required! Let this be done, and then the longer he should stand out in impenitence and rebellion against God's demand to repent

now, the more like a Christian must he become? If the sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to the Lord, do they cease to be so by being repeated three, five, or ten times a day? and do they become less and less offensive by every subsequent *repetition?* What was the fact in relation to the scribes and Pharisees? They were the most punctilious in the performance of the external duties of religion, and what was the tendency of this course? Did they come nearer and nearer to the point of penitence and holiness?—become more and more like God? The Son of God himself compares them to *whited* SEPULCHRES. What a representation to describe the *holy* tendency of religious duties performed by impenitent men! Can there be any such tendency in that which is insulting to a holy God, and at war with his claims and his character? Is not *obedience* better than sacrifice? I say not that a person will not become a Christian—that he is placed beyond the reach of hope or mercy, who lives in the performance of the external duties of religion. But I do say, that these external services, when performed in impenitence, are sinful, are an abomination to God, and therefore have no tendency to produce holiness. I will now go still farther, and remark,

3. That God himself has *stamped the seal of reprobation upon such services.* "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear." (Isa. i. 11–15.) This is God's testimony relative to his own views and feelings of the very subject under consideration. He had required these duties to be performed, but with feelings directly the reverse of those possessed by the persons here ad-

dressed. While their hearts were not right in the sight of God, and they were rolling sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues, and were refusing to repent of and forsake it, they could not more directly insult the Most High than by this round of mock services, which he condemns in the most unqualified manner. "To what *purpose* is the multitude of your sacrifices?" What valuable end can they possibly answer? "Who hath required this at your hands, *to tread my courts*" with the feelings and character which you bring? "Bring no more *vain* oblations." Mark the prohibition. "Oblations" of a different kind God demanded; but these were "vain," or sinful, and would not, and could not be tolerated. "Bring *no more*," therefore, says God, —not a single one. "Incense is an *abomination* unto me," "it is *iniquity*, even the *solemn meeting*!" "And when ye *spread forth your hands*, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye *make many prayers*, I will not hear."

I repeat it, this is *God's* testimony,—this is *God's* representation; not indeed the whole of what he has said upon the subject, but barely a *specimen* of his views, and of the light in which he regards the external religious services of impenitent men. Is there not, then, the most unequivocal proof that God can never look upon them with approbation, while they continue to stand out in rebellion, and in their refusal to repent and turn to the Lord? This he demands as their *first* duty; he "*now* commands all men everywhere to repent;" and until they comply, they are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. They may maintain an external deportment as irreproachable, and perform the external duties of religion with as much punctiliousness, as the scribes and Pharisees, and yet be nothing better than *whited sepulchres*, beautiful indeed outward, but in the sight of God SEPULCHRES still. What a humiliating view does this give us of the boasted goodness of the very best of the ungodly. They may go through with the whole catalogue of the external duties of the Christian without a particle of piety, and while the wrath of a holy God is still following them; and this can never be averted by any of these external compliances. God demands "a broken and contrite heart" for sin. With nothing short of

this will he be satisfied. "To *obey* is *better than sacrifice.*" Nay more, while the sinner refuses to come to this point, in the performance of every one of these external duties he is committing sin enough to sink the soul to everlasting perdition.

But the question is here asked, by way of objection to the view presented in the preceding pages, 'May not the sinner who has no religion use the means to obtain it? Shall he be cut off entirely from attending to those things which are necessary to his becoming a Christian?'

Before replying directly, a word may be necessary respecting the vague and confused ideas relative to this subject. People are very often heard to speak of religion, and of *obtaining* it, as though it were some external object, into the possession of which they might come as they would into that of a farm or a treasure. But what is RELIGION, divested of all the mist and fog that have been made to envelop it? It is simply loving God with all the heart. It has already been observed, that this love will be connected with repentance for sin, faith in the Lord Jesus, and all the Christian graces. It may be added, in one word, that this love will secure unhesitating obedience to the requirements of God, so far as they are known. *Loving* and *serving* God, then, make up the whole of religion. But as love is the main-spring of the whole, and lays the foundation for the existence of all that God requires, it is appropriately not only the *fulfilling of the law*, but the *sum* and *substance* of a compliance with the gospel. This, then, is RELIGION, viz. *loving God supremely*. It is this that constitutes a person a Christian. The question, then, whether a person destitute of religion should not *use the means to obtain it*, amounts to nothing more or less than this, whether a person who has no love to God should not *use the means to love Him?* But what *means* to love can be used, but *loving?*—but *putting forth the very exercise* which God demands with those faculties which He has given us? And how long need the sinner *wait* to do this? and what round of external services is it necessary to perform, before he can comply with this simple requirement of Jehovah, *to love him supremely?* This is *religion*—the only religion that will save the

soul,—the religion which God demands that the sinner should *now* possess. "To *obey* is better than sacrifice,"—better than any external service which he can render while he refuses to comply; nay more, every such mere external service is an *abomination* in the sight of God. Are any of these external duties to be performed in this manner as the means of obtaining religion, when religion consists simply in *loving God with all the heart*, and the obedience connected with this love? Must a sinner perform a "quarantine" of abominations before he can put forth the love which God demands? and are these abominations to be dignified with the appellation of the necessary means of religion? But the sinner is not doomed to remain impenitent for a single moment for the purpose of insulting God in any mock service of religion. Nor is there any necessity of any such service as a preparation to his loving God with all the heart, and repenting of sin. He may drop the weapons of his rebellion this very moment, and fall at the feet of mercy with a broken and penitent heart for his sins,—enough already, without adding to the number by a few more impenitent services. God demands this surrender; with nothing short of this will he or can he be satisfied. "To obey is better than sacrifice."

But the sinner is still ready to inquire, 'May I not do something as a preparation for repentance?' And what will you do as a preparation?—continue to *sin* still longer? Suppose a child should ask if he might not do something as a *preparation* for *being sorry* that he had disobeyed the reasonable command of a parent? What would you think of such a question, but that he wished to evade a duty so reasonable, and yet wanted some pretence that had the appearance of plausibility, to urge in extenuation for not *at once* sorrowing as his conduct demanded? And are you, fellow-sinner, more consistent? Why not come to the point *now*, as God, in the most unqualified terms, demands? God has given you no liberty to delay this work for a single hour or moment; and will you take the liberty? The only preparation to repent which you need, is to know that you have offended God by your sins. This you know already. Will you *wait* then? will you take another step nearer the wailings

of the damned, before your heart break, and you kneel down in penitence for your guilt? O, sinner, beware of any plea that shall only serve to aggravate your guilt, and quiet your conscience in the pathway to death! Do you expect to soften down your heart by any round of external services, while you remain impenitent? But you never have and never can perform one of these duties as God *requires*, without penitence; and he will frown upon every impenitent effort.

But the question is still agitated, 'If this be the light in which the sinner is to be regarded who gives his attention to the external duties of religion; if he is to be condemned for every impenitent effort to perform them, shall he *neglect these duties?*' I reply, if God has given him *liberty* to do it, he may; but if he has not given him the liberty, he *may not take* it. To suppose that he is excused for the nonperformance of any of the external duties of religion, on the ground that he has no penitence for his sin, would be to suppose that a positive disobedience in any particular would be an excuse for neglecting a plain commanded duty in another,—that sin would be an excuse or justification of sin.

But the sinner is not justified in neglecting *any* duty which God demands. OBEDIENCE must be written upon the whole history of his outward acts, as well as upon the feelings of the heart. Not a single external duty may be dispensed with. But the manner in which they must be performed is obvious; not with an impenitent heart, and an aversion to God's character; but with penitence for sin and love to his character. No external duty is performed as he requires, unless performed in this manner. Otherwise it is *sin*, as positively as any transgression in the whole history of the sinner's rebellion; and not merely sin, but sin of a most offensive character; it is "ABOMINATION."

Say not, then, fellow-sinner, that this discourse countenances the *neglect* of any of the external duties of religion. What God requires of any Christian, he requires of *you*,—and requires of you *now*. You cannot neglect one of these duties, without incurring *guilt*; and you cannot perform them aright, without penitence for sin, and love to the character of God. This is the

reason why, on God's authority, I have been urging you to *immediate repentance*. God demands it unconditionally,—and it is absolutely necessary to the right, or even acceptable performance of any external duty; and until you do repent, every such service will be abomination in the sight of God; and for it you will deserve the everlasting perdition of the ungodly. But are you excused from these external duties, because you hate God's character and requirements, and love your sins? Present this plea at the bar of God, if you can open your mouth for such a purpose, and see whether the lightnings of his wrath will not send a thrill of agony through your soul, unfelt before! Tell him, that the fact of your *hating* him exempted you from all obligation to perform any external duty which he demanded! Dare you think of such a plea? Can you do it without withering all your hopes for eternity? If reading the word of God, prayer, and an attendance upon the instituted means of grace, are the duties of any one, they are the duties which *you* are bound to perform, and perform without delay,—and perform them, too, in a *penitent believing manner*. This is necessary to prevent them from being an abomination in his sight. Is there, then, any thing in this subject that is adapted to justify a neglect of any known duty? I repeat it, you are under obligation to perform every external duty which God has demanded,—to perform it *now*,—and to perform it with the very penitence and love and faith which have been urged in this discourse. Do this, and you will be accepted,—refuse, and you do it at your own hazard, and must meet the consequences.

But perhaps the sinner is ready to inquire, *What must I do?* The Bible informs you,—*repent* as God requires, and *love him* with all the heart. 'But may I not defer repentance at all?' God "*now* commandeth all men everywhere to repent." 'But if I should not repent now, will it not make some amends if I perform the external duties of religion?' "The *sacrifices* of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to *tread my courts?* Bring no more *vain* oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons, and sabbaths, and calling of as-

semblies, I cannot away with. It is *iniquity*, even *the solemn meeting!* And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

If you find fault with this, fellow-sinners, you find fault with God's own representation of the very subject under consideration. He has stamped the seal of *reprobation* upon every external religious service, in which you engage, without penitence for your sins and love for his character and requirements. But you ask, 'May I not pray?' God replies, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his *prayer* shall be an *abomination.*" 'Then I will not pray, if I am to be condemned for it.' But, "the *ploughing* of the wicked is sin." 'Then I will not plough,—I will neglect my worldly affairs.' But God replies, "the *thoughts* of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." 'Then I will not'——speak it out, fellow-sinner, if you will. Tell God that if he condemns you for thinking, you will not *think!* This is a specimen only of the controversy which the sinner is carrying on with his Bible and his God! He starts in the wrong direction, and for every step he takes he is condemned. And while God urges and expostulates, "*Turn* ye, *turn* ye, for why will ye die?" the sinner wages a still more determined war with reason, and conscience, and his Maker; and treads with longer and more rapid strides, the way to death. Nay more, he has determined, in the face of all the light of truth, and the pressure of obligation, to trample upon every command of Jehovah!

But stop, fellow-sinners, for one moment, and look calmly at the reason *why* you have purposed to discard and neglect the external duties of religion. It is because God will not accept them, performed in *impenitence*, and with hearts opposed to his character and requirements. He demands your supreme affection, and you will not yield it; he requires of you immediate repentance for sin, and you are determined to roll it still as a sweet morsel under your tongues. And while this is the fact, you take the attitude of open rebels against him and his government: and because he will not *patronise*, will not *approve* of your rebellion, you have deliberately determined TO SET EVERY COM-

MAND AND OBLIGATION OF JEHOVAH AT DEFIANCE! But have you counted the cost of taking such a step? Have you weighed well the fearful consequences which it must involve? Are you prepared to meet them? "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; but WO UNTO HIM THAT STRIVETH WITH HIS MAKER!"

The subject to which our attention has been called, suggests, in conclusion, several important practical remarks:—

1. We may learn from our subject, that those who are giving their attendance upon the external duties of religion, under the apprehension that they are doing all in their power, and all that God demands of them, as a compliance with the terms of the gospel, are deluded.

They have not yet taken the first step towards a compliance with God's demands. He requires the supreme affection of their hearts, and they give it to the world, to self, to sin. He demands repentance for their sin, and they *refuse* to repent; and substitute reading the Bible, attendance upon a preached word, and professed prayer. Nay, they may go through with the whole circle of Christian duties, so far as the external performance is concerned, and yet not take a single step towards obeying God,—towards a compliance with his requirements,—do nothing but what is abomination in the sight of God. It is a question which ought to be pondered by every sinner in this condition, and taking this course, whether a holy God will be likely to bear long with such a system of solemn mockery? Is it *safe*, (after being fully enlightened on the subject,) to repeat the insults which have been offered to him who has testified his abhorrence of these heartless services? O, "bring *no more* vain oblations." For you may have reached the last point of endurance, when God shall say, "CUT IT DOWN!"

But do you still ask, what you shall do? God has already told you—"To *obey* is better than sacrifice." "He *now* commandeth all men everywhere to repent"; *now*, NOW, is the day of salvation! Will you then drop the weapons of your rebellion, and *now* submit to the terms of mercy? If you ask whether you shall neglect the external duties of religion? I reply, not one of them for one moment. But perform them with

a penitent, broken, contrite heart, and with love to the character of God. Do this and you are a Christian. He demands this repentance now, and that this penitence should attend the performance of every external religious duty,—not one of which may be dispensed with. But the inquiry is still urged, 'Should I *not* repent now, am I authorized in neglecting these external duties until I do repent?' God has given you no liberty, fellow-sinner, to neglect either repentance or *any other* duty for a single hour; and if you *take* the liberty, you do it at your own risk; and assume a responsibility that might well make an angel tremble.

But the question is still propounded, by way of objection to the view here presented—'Is not the sinner more likely to become a Christian in an *attendance* upon the external duties of religion, than in a *neglect* of these?' I remark, in reply, that I am not authorized to recommend rebellion in any shape; or to say that one course of disobedience and rebellion is better adapted or more likely to make a person a Christian, than another. God condemns every species of this, and I dare not do otherwise. I know not what tendency there is in sin, in any form, to make a person a Christian,—to make him love God. The sinner has rebelled against the authority and government of Jehovah. God requires him to repent of this; he refuses; and while under this refusal, he wishes to know which is the most likely way to become a Christian, to insult God by a mock-service of religion; or to set every command of Jehovah at defiance! Sinner, I put the question back to you, is there any BETTER about it?—with such a phalanx of truth by the side of your conscience—and the whole of this resisted, can you feel that your prospects are brightening; that there is any thing very flattering before you? If you are solicitous about the course in which you will be most likely to become a Christian, and are willing to take it; it is, *repent*, and do it *now*. I dare not give any other direction, or encouragement in any other course. There is no other way in which you *can* become a Christian—defer it as you may. You must come to this point—*repent of sin*, because committed against a holy God. Will you speculate about your being likely to become a Christian, while you defer this, in any course of sin

which you may take? Is there not a fearful probability against you, if you defer it for one hour? Are you sure that God will not, within this *very hour*, strike the blow that will at once dissolve your connexion with time?—or, what is still more awful, "depart from you" for ever? Dismiss encouragement, then, from procrastination, for any purpose; and while you are making up your decision whether you will *repent* now, bear in mind that it *may* be your last decision on the subject—may be the turning point in the history of your being, and seal your eternal destination! I appeal to your conscience then, is there any other than *one* course that is SAFE?—viz. IMMEDIATE *compliance* with the terms of mercy?

2. The subject to which our attention has been called shows us the proper answer to be given to the momentous inquiry, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

If the view which has now been presented be founded in truth, that individual assumes a fearful responsibility, who attempts to guide inquiring sinners in the way to heaven. Let the attention of the sinner be turned off from the single point of *God's claim*, and his *duty*, as a subject on hand, to be attended to now, as the turning point in his history; to any thing else in the universe that can be made a *substitute* for that compliance, or an excuse for *deferring* it a single moment—and so long, at least, he will not come to the point of repentance and submission. On this subject, while so much simplicity and directness characterizes the answer which the Bible gives to the important inquiry, "What must I do?" it is amazing, that such a widely different course should have been pursued by any real friend of God!—by any real Christian!

Brethren, have we not cause for solicitude, lest the blood of some souls shall be found in *our* skirts, in consequence of the loose instruction given them at the most interesting moment of their existence, when the Spirit of God had brought them to the most solemn inquiry which they ever made? Were they encouraged to substitute any thing for *immediate* repentance, and an unconditional surrender of themselves into the hands of that God whom they had offended? that instruction may have exerted

an influence to occasion the loss of souls for eternity! The Bible is a plain, a safe guide. Shall it not be followed?

3. But I remark, once more, and finally, that every impenitent sinner has cause for the deepest solicitude.

He will not perish because he could not have been saved. The provisions of grace are abundant, and are offered freely to all; not a single sinner therefore need perish. He cannot plead *ignorance* in excuse, if he has had his being in a Christian land. Especially the individuals whom I now address, have *known* their duty,—they have been urged again and again to make their peace with God without delay, and comply with the terms of mercy; they have been assured to-day that "the wrath of God abideth on them," and cannot be averted by any external religious services, while their hearts are not right in the sight of God; while they refuse to repent of sin, and give their Maker the supreme affection of their hearts. If what has been exhibited be the truth, your condition is fearfully alarming. There is but one way in which peace or safety can be obtained; and every moment's delay is jeoparding the interests of your precious souls. God *now* commands you to *repent*. Will you do it? Will you do it as the *first* thing?—will you do it NOW? O, decide the question in view of that day, when I shall meet you again, before the eternal Judge. DECIDE IT NOW; or God *may* take the decision out of your hands; for

> "MERCY knows th' appointed bound,—
> And turns to vengeance there!"

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SERMON CXXXII.

Preached in New-York, October 3, 1832, before the American Board of Foreign Missions.

BY WILLIAM ALLEN, D. D.

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FREEDOM CONFERRED ONLY BY THE GOSPEL.

John viii. 36.—*If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

In this world truth and error are struggling for victory. The field of contest is the human intellect. The prize contended for is man, immortal man; and it is his destiny either to be bound for ever in the chains of error, or to be led forth in eternal freedom and glory by the hand of truth. From the earliest times, this conflict has been going on; the war is still waging; nor will it cease, until delusion shall loose its hold of the human mind, and the kingdom of truth and righteousness be established throughout the earth. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming from heaven, brought the truth to men in order to liberate them from the miserable bondage of sin. It is implied in his instructions, connected with the text, that all other supposed methods of freeing men from the servitude of error and iniquity are ineffectual. *If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* The point here set before us is, that THE GOSPEL IS THE ONLY POWER WHICH CAN DISINTHRALL ENSLAVED MAN, AND BESTOW UPON HIM THE FREEDOM OF HOLINESS AND JOY.

I. In attempting to establish this position, I shall first consider the inadequacy of the other influences which have been supposed to have an important bearing on the welfare of the world.

1. The power of *civilization* is feeble in the contest with moral and natural evil. Although the contrast is very striking between a barbarous and civilized state, and although the descriptions which have been given of the Arcadian simplicity and innocence of the children of nature, have been found to be mere romance; yet the blessings of civilization are often very limited, and fail to remove the evils by which the family of man are afflicted. In the result of civilization, we may see the deep spirit of revenge and the secret blow of retaliation *yielding to the* power of law. Many domestic and social virtues

may spring up. Many conveniences and luxuries, before untasted, may be enjoyed. But civilization has not the effect of removing the most cruel superstition and degrading idolatry. The most refined of the nations of antiquity were worshippers of gods of every name and form, often with rites of indescribable turpitude. The very governments themselves, which had been established, supported idolatry, and bound the people to it by chains which could be broken only by the power of God. Even now there are nations highly civilized where yet the people are the wretched thralls of superstition and the most deplorable idolatry.

Besides this, there have prevailed and still prevail among civilized states very gross and flagrant vices, and sometimes enormous crimes are tolerated. The government established is perhaps a grinding tyranny, and although the subject may be shielded against injuries from a fellow-subject, yet all may be in the power of a proud master, accustomed to indulge his passions without restraint and without fear. What can be more wonderful than to see civilized nations punishing with merited death the midnight assassin or solitary murderer, and yet eagerly and for slight occasions arraying themselves for battle,—rushing upon each other with hideous shouts, with the ferocity of wild beasts and the malignity of devils, and in the shock falling together by thousands in miserable death? What can be more astonishing than this, excepting that the civilized survivors agree to obliterate from their minds the thought of *murder*, and speak only of noble bearing, and heroic resistance, and glorious victory? Yet such has been the custom of civilized nations in all ages.

2. The progress of *mechanical ingenuity* is incompetent to secure the happiness of the human family. Never has the power of mind over matter been so wonderfully displayed as in the present age. The elements are now made to perform, with the greatest rapidity, the work which was formerly done by the slow and tedious labor of human hands. The superintendence of one, with the aid of water and fire, now brings out results which formerly required the toil of thousands. Millions of little wheels, apparently self-moved, are spinning the threads, which by shuttles, seemingly thrown by invisible hands, are woven into the finest webs. The old method of travelling by the fleetness of horses is going out of repute, and three or four times the former speed is now gained by the power of steam. Whether the same power will unyoke our oxen from the plough, we are not yet able to determine. Many, however, are cherishing high hopes of the improvement of the human race, from the progress of mechanical philosophy. It has been thought, that human hands will be so freed from the necessity of labor, that ample leisure will be furnished to the great mass of mankind for intellectual culture, and thus that a new aspect will be given to the condition of the world. Will these hopes be realized?

The accumulation and general diffusion of wealth in the community will indeed release many hands from labor; but the leisure enjoyed may be abused to purposes of luxurious and criminal indulgence, and *will be*, without the restraint of moral and religious principle. Besides, there are very obvious limits to this anticipated release from manual industry. Almost all the hundreds of millions, who are nourished on the earth, are dependent for their food on the careful, toiling hand of agriculture. The ground must be cultivated; the seeds cast into the furrow; the fruits of harvest gathered. Mechanical improvements will not repeal the sentence passed upon man,—*Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also*

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...bition, what is the peace of the community?—
...ality and order, of virtue and religion? The
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perhaps with an entire failure of the grand anticipated results. If with the culture of the mind there should be no culture of the heart; if a moral and religious influence is to be banished from our schools and colleges; if man, an immortal being, shall study only the laws of the material world, and overlook his relation to God and to the scenes of eternity; if he is taught every thing excepting that which it is ineffably the most important that he should understand; then we shall find that a new and terrible energy is given to unholy passion, and, although knowledge is power, that undirected, misapplied, perverted power is an object of dread.

For the advantages of *civil liberty* in our country we have great occasion of gratitude to God. Our rulers proceed from ourselves, and are responsible to the people. The church is distinct from the state. Our ministers of religion are not titled dignitaries, with princely incomes,—idle shepherds who care not for the flock, yet clothe themselves with the fleece, died in scarlet. Our ministers, happily for our country, are *working men;* not working in the cause of superstition and delusion, but in the cause of the people and in the cause of God; and every man is allowed to worship God agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience, and is under no compulsion to support any form of religion whatever. The Jew and the Mahommedan may live among us undisturbed; the infidel and the atheist have nothing to fear excepting from truth, and their own conscience, and God. Never can we be sufficiently grateful to Heaven that we behold the temple of liberty rising in fair proportions, capacious, easy of access, an asylum to the oppressed of all nations. But while the people are free from external restraint, are they also free from the malignant influence of party, and the sway of unholy passions? Is there not something else necessary to their happiness besides the knowledge and enjoyment of their natural rights, and the protection of the most perfect government on the face of the earth? Have we not seen, and do we not see in our country exemplified and verified, the maxim, that "party or faction is the madness of many for the benefit of a few?" We are apt to attach great importance to the party distinctions which have prevailed since the adoption of the federal constitution. The success or the defeat of a particular party has been thought to have a decided bearing on the welfare of the community and the great interests of republican liberty. But on this point listen to an eminent statesman, who says, "Our collisions of principle have been little, very little more than conflicts for place." Such is the humiliating result of the experience and observation, for forty years, of one who has witnessed all the conflicts of party, and has occupied the highest place in the government of the United States.

If this be a true account of the past, then is it not probable that, unless some new influence be felt, the future will resemble it, and that hereafter, as heretofore, the earnest struggles of party will be struggles for office? Our citizens will be arrayed against each other for bitter conflict; but the end will be like that of most of the wars which have ravaged the earth; after the battle is over, at the expense of the hardships and sufferings of the combatant dupes and slaves, a few men, their leaders and masters, reap all the little honor and profit of the warfare. Were this evil remediless, it were idle to dwell upon it; but a cure may be found in the diffusion of *moral and religious instruction*, in connexion with literary and scientific improvement. Let there be a firm and immovable principle of Christian virtue, conjoined with intelligence, among the people, and they will prefer *the triumph of right* to that of party, and they will ask for no other victory but *that of truth. A calm* and virtuous mind will detect the imposture of the pretended

patriot, who speaks much of the public good, meaning only his own. To the man of covetousness and greedy ambition, what is the peace of the community?—what are the great interests of morality and order, of virtue and religion? The welfare of the people is the pretence, the lure; but self is the moving power. Let the people be disciplined in virtue; let a spirit of mutual kindness and good-will govern them instead of a spirit of scorn, and hatred, and defiance; and they will not suffer themselves to become the instruments by which the unprincipled and worthless may lift themselves to office and power. Let them unite virtue with intelligence; and then will wholesome laws be uniformly carried into effect.

But were the energy of our laws always sustained; were our magistrates always men of upright, noble, disinterested views, having no aim but the public welfare; what is the amount of good which would spring from this perfection of government but this, that the facilities of procuring a subsistence or of acquiring wealth are increased, and that the people are protected in the enjoyment of their rights? Let it be, that a good government will shield from injustice the lowest as well as the highest; let it be, that such a government will shut out the losses, the corrupting influence, the desolating miseries of war. But can government stay the destroying plague, which, in its march from India, has trampled on the lives of fifty millions, and has come to our shores? Or can government stay the prevalence of error and vice which infect our whole atmosphere, predisposing and preparing victims for eternal death? No. This freedom from sin and consequent misery is not the direct result of government; but of the truth of God. The gospel must come with its purifying energy to the hearts of mankind, or the deadly plague of sin will still prevail, and continue to people hell with its victims.

4. The confidence, which is placed in *Philosophy* for the advancement of human happiness, will be found fallacious. If even the general education of the people will not of itself secure the public welfare; what shall we think of those grand anticipations of human improvement and perfectibility, which are founded upon the progress of science among the learned? Are they any thing more than the creations of fancy? The most learned nations, nations which have been the most prolific of philosophers, have not always been the most virtuous and happy. Science has ever been attended with a corruption of manners. It might be an error to regard them as bearing the relation of cause and effect. Both may have a common origin in a high degree of civilization and national prosperity, affording, on the one side, leisure and opportunity for intellectual culture in minds eager for philosophical inquiry; and, on the other side, furnishing scope for depraved and degrading indulgence. Who is not aware, that some of the most learned men have been abandoned to enormous vices? And who is not aware also, that, among nations holding a proud rank in science, the moral virtues have been, like the plants in a sandy desert, rarely seen, and, when seen, struggling for life in the arid plain and under a parching sun?

Of all the sciences of the present day the most boastful as to its effect on human happiness is *Political Economy*. Its aim is the production and distribution of wealth: but is wealth the highest good of man? Let it be, that this science may lead to the abrogation of many absurd laws, which put chains upon human activity, and may teach the few, who have leisure for its study, to add wisely to their individual wealth. But can political economy ever abrogate that law of God, which is stamped upon the condition of man, and which subjects him to the necessity of procuring his bread by the sweat of his face? Can the six

hundred millions of men live without food, and clothing, and habitations?—and will the stubborn earth yield its fruit, without human labor, at the call of political economy?—or, while the hand of man is idle, will the prolific ocean deliver its finny tribes upon the shore for our subsistence? Though the wheel and the loom may move without human power,—yet can the materials for clothing be raised and collected by the magic of science, or will the rocks, and the clay, and the trees of the forest fashion themselves into houses for indolent, happy man? Political economy has for a few years past been the pride of Great Britain. What has it effected? Let the ten thousands of the degraded and starving population of Britain, who have been poured upon our shores in pursuit of work and of bread, bear witness.

It is *Metaphysical Philosophy*, which peculiarly and emphatically claims the name of philosophy, and which in different ages has called forth the utmost efforts of men of the most powerful intellect. If the truth makes men free, how can philosophy have any effect in promoting the liberation of man, unless it be true? And what has been the character of human philosophy? What has been its relation to truth? What have been the proud *theories*, which learned, contemplative men have constructed by the toil of years, and what have been most of the celebrated *schools*, which have succeeded each other from age to age down even to the present day, but theories and schools of error and folly? What shall we think of the system of *Pantheism*, which makes all nature, all worlds, every plant and animal, a part of God? and what of the opposite system, which asserts, in the metaphysical language, an *absolute unity*, exclusive of all plurality, and which regards the world as having merely a shadowy existence, and our relation to it as an illusion? Yet for these theories have learned philosophers in different ages contended,—for a world without a God and Creator, or for a God without a world;—for a visible God to the denial of spirit, or for an invisible God to the denial of matter.

What shall we think of a philosophy, which wastes its strength in the discussion of *Ideas* as the eternal essence of things residing in absolute intelligence, and as general existences, which make the foundation of all true knowledge? Yet such was the philosophy of Plato, which still clouds the minds of many learned men. What shall we think of the philosophy, which asserts that pain is no evil? or of that, which says that motion is impossible, and that nothing is certain excepting its own skepticism? What shall we think of the philosophy, which asserts that all human volitions result from causes beyond the control of man, who is thus made a machine, instead of being a moral agent, and which infers, that man has no occasion for the sentiment of remorse, and cannot be exposed to future punishment? Yet such is the doctrine of modern Socinianism and of ancient materialism. The same philosophy is that of Kapila in India, maintaining, that our determination or volition, which we imagine to be free, is only a necessary effect, thus subjecting man to fatalism. We might let huge errors or absurdities pass unnoticed, were they harmless; but if philosophical theories, which God permits in order to humiliate the pride of reason, are perilous to morals and religion, then it is time to examine the foundation on which they are built. If the ancient atomists deduced from the doctrine of fatalism consequences unfriendly to virtue; if the same consequences were deduced by the materialists of India; if the infidels of France and Great Britain have as an inference denied the guilt of man or transferred it to God; if Socinianism concludes confidently, that the necessarian has no cause for self-reproach; and if modern universalism, in its influence blasting to morals and piety, derives all the

nourishment at its root from the conceit, that God absolutely and irresistibly forms every man's sinful character; then surely they who hold to the doctrine of necessity must have a difficult task to prove, that all these conclusions, in which men of different ages and nations and intellect and moral character have concurred, are really illegitimate deductions, and that man, though bound in chains of iron, walks forth unshackled, free, and moveable as the air of heaven.

The present most distinguished philosopher in France, after describing the succession of what he deems the four great and best systems, into which the philosophy of every age may be resolved, *sensualism*, *idealism*, *skepticism*, and *mysticism*,—all, in his opinion, very good and useful, though in part erroneous,—comes to this conclusion, which strikes as with a thunderbolt the pretensions of philosophy,—"Error is the law of our nature; we are condemned to error; and in all our opinions, in all our words, there is a great mixture of error and even of absurdity." Such is the sentence, which the eloquent lecturer at Paris pronounces upon the host of philosophers, who have preceded him for three thousand years. His own attempt to present an eclectic system, in which the wheat is winnowed from the chaff, shows very clearly, that his sentence upon others is not inapplicable to himself. Such is the judgment of a distinguished metaphysical philosopher: "Error is the law of our nature." But Jesus Christ says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. He that believeth in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

After examining the history of philosophy in the different ages of the world one is constrained to believe, that, by the wild, contradictory, incredible, monstrous philosophical systems, which have risen one upon the ruins of another, it has been the purpose of Providence to "stain the pride" of human reason, and to show to the universe, that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." The mere philosophy of man is thus brought into contempt, that the revelation from God might be honored, and that men might see the wisdom of receiving with the docility and the implicit confidence of children the instructions which their omniscient Father has given them.

The conclusion from this survey of philosophy is this,—we must come to the Bible as the fountain of moral and religious wisdom. When the Scriptures are proved to be the word of God, and the plain, obvious meaning of the revelation from heaven is unfolded; when the truth is thus brought to the mind of the sinner; then and then only can we hope to see the blessings of salvation descend upon the soul. Philosophy is powerless in this work of saving. If it does not lead down to hell, it can never guide up to heaven. The Bible, the Bible only, contains the true philosophy, which, accompanied by the Divine Spirit, reconciles man to God, changes the depraved character into the form of excellence, and conducts the poor child of mortality through the dark valley of death to mansions of eternal light and glory.

5. The general happiness of the world can never be secured by *irreligion*, nor by any erroneous and *corrupt form of religion*.

What has been accomplished by *atheism* and *infidelity* for the benefit of mankind? You may learn by looking at ancient *Rome*, when the retraints of superstition were loosened by the prevalence of the atheistic system: for soon the general dissolution of manners destroyed the foundations of public order, and despotic power rose upon the ruins. From the horrors of the revolution in *France*, at the close of the last century, it is impossible to separate the systems of *atheism and infidelity*, which, by the banishment of all moral restraints, had

prepared the minds of men for every enormity of crime. A decided and thorough spirit of irreligion pervaded the people. Infidelity extinguished the fear of God; it resigned conscience to passion; it rescued no victim from the bloodthirsty aspirant, nor lifted a voice of mercy against the ferocious madness of the times. No. It is not by denying a God, a Providence, a future reckoning, an eternal judgment, that the dagger is wrested from the hand of the assassin; that property is secured against the grasp of covetousness; and that the pollution of universal lust is changed into purity and honor. There must be a divine law of unchanging rectitude, and a stern sanction, which is competent to bend the iron sinew of pride, and to bring the terrors of eternal justice to bear upon the solicitations of appetite, and the otherwise ungovernable energies of passion.

Infidelity in Great Britain and America is seen in a different point of view from the public theatre on which it was displayed in France; its appropriate influence is to be sought in the professed principles and in the more private lives of the masters of the school. In their lives we shall find either degrading vices and crimes, or a dearth of the great and generous virtues; and in their doctrines we shall find loose moral instructions, accommodated to the unholy passions of the heart, and designed to fortify the depraved spirit in its hostility to the pure and perfect law of God. It has been manifested and proved to the world, that the system of infidelity, by denying the righteous government of God and the rewards and punishments of eternity, subverts the foundation of morals;—that it breaks down the distinction between right and wrong, substituting every man's variable judgment in the place of the immutable standard of heaven;—that under powerful temptations to crime, arising from insatiable cupidity or raging ambition, it removes, if there be a prospect of present impunity, all restraint;—and that it cherishes an absorbing egotism or vanity, an unpitying ferocity, and an unbridled sensuality, by the indulgence of which the tranquillity and happiness of society are laid waste.

Paganism is the great parent of iniquity and of unutterable abominations among several hundreds of millions of the human family. Shall we ask for truth, for instance, from the religion of India? Among the sects of the Braminic system, to which shall we apply? Shall we ask the followers of Vishnoo, of Sheeva, or of Bramhu? The voice that responds to us will speak of numerous forms and incarnations of male and female gods; of successive annihilations and reproductions of all created existence, including the gods; of interminable and ridiculous fables; and of idolatrous and shameless worship, which in a Christian country cannot even be named. Shall we ask for virtue, purity, goodness, from the religion of India? Alas, the question will excite only a smile. Indian idolatry is drenched in pollution, and the idolatry of every other country is associated with crime and misery.

Mahomedanism is the religion of sensuality and of violence, awakening the spirit of scorn instead of a spirit of benevolence, and cherishing with the utmost care and as the first object the ferocious energies of war. Ignorant, degraded, profligate, enslaved Turkey, exhibits at the present day the benefits which the world may expect from Islamism: the millions who have perished by the sabre of the prophet and his followers, could they rise from the dead, would speak aloud of the character and tendency of the Mahomedan religion.

Romanism has set up an authority on the earth, which comes in the place of *God, and exhibits an* ecclesiastical monarch at Rome, often of a notoriously *profligate character, who either* by himself or a council, claims the right of set-

tling for the whole human race the faith of the understanding and the decisions of conscience, and which thus would enslave to ambition, pride, lust, and covetousness, the intellect and moral feelings of all mankind. Popery appears under the double aspect of a frightful persecuting power, and the teacher of most pernicious and fatal error. In its history we may see mingled the flames of persecution, the blood of the martyrs, the tortures of the inquisition, the various massacres of heretics, with the idolatry, covetousness, pollution, pride, and horrible crimes, which have marked the seat of the beast on the seven-hilled "eternal city." Is the dread of popery an idle apprehension, produced by a bugbear? We trust it may be so soon. It may be so now, in some Protestant countries: it may be so in our own. But popery has been in past ages, and is still, in many nations, a most terrific power. We may indeed look without trembling on the yellow-maned lion of Africa, who is brought to America in a strong cage. But on his native sands, where he roams in majesty, king of the desert, there is neither man nor beast that can abide his roaring. Has not the foot of the pope trodden on the neck of monarchs? It was but a few years before the French revolution, that the degraded, enslaved states of Europe annually poured into the treasury of the Roman church more than two millions of dollars, while the revenue of the papal territory itself was three millions, making an income to the pretended vicar of Jesus Christ of five millions annually. Had the pope been indeed the vicar of Jesus Christ, with this sum annually put into his hands, it would seem, that in any period of half a century it would have been in his power to have sent out such an agency of truth, as would have converted the whole family of man to the Christian faith, and made this desolate earth as the paradise of God. But instead of being employed in building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the revenue of the Catholic church has been wasted in supporting the regal splendor of the servant of servants; in providing for his *nephews*, as a nearer relationship is conveniently expressed; in purchasing curious works of art; in building splendid churches and palaces; in keeping up a standing army, and in carrying on war; and the consequence is, that this *god* on the earth is now burthened with a public debt of a hundred millions of dollars, which he will never be able to pay. Popery, as to its physical power, is now comparatively weak. Its spiritual dominion also has been much curtailed by the resistance of reason and common sense to absurdity and tyranny, resulting, from the want of Protestant light, in a wide-spread infidelity in the Catholic countries of Europe. Still a great part of the people of Europe know nothing of the Christian religion but in that new form of idolatry, into which it has been cast by the great magician at Rome. And who is not aware, that popery exerts in no country a powerful moral influence, and that the history of the past forbids the hope that it will ever be able to meliorate the condition of the pagan nations of the earth? We may hope, that at no remote period, as the authority of Romanism sinks into contempt, and the judgments of God strike the guilty city, the kings of the earth, whose fetters shall be broken, will say,—*Alas, alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.* Then will *the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, saying, alas, alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to naught.* And then will all, who love the truth, say,—*Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.*

The various forms of error among the Protestant Christian sects cannot be

pointed out. Happily, most of the principal sects have a considerable degree of harmony in respect to the most essential articles of their faith. If some sects deny the great and essential doctrines of the Gospel, and discharge the conscience of the sinner from the dread of future retribution;—we cannot be ignorant, that their errors have no tendency to restrain men from criminal indulgence, nor to lead them to the abandonment of iniquity, nor to excite them to the generous toils of a self-denying charity, without which the face of the earth will never be renewed.

Thus it is obvious that civilization, mechanical invention, intellectual culture, government, philosophy, and false religion, are incompetent to secure the happiness of man.

II. The Gospel *has power* to liberate enslaved man, and to render him holy and happy.

That, when the earth was the abode of error and crime, and the unhappy race of man was corrupt and lost, God so loved the world as to send his Son, the brightness of his glory, by whom he created the universe, down from heaven to appear in the form of man as the minister of his mercy,—to expiate sin by his death upon the cross,—to rise from the dead as a victorious king,—and to disclose the laws, truths, and motives, pure, sublime, and energetic, by which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the human character is transformed, and depraved man is made the friend of God,—seem to be the chief elementary principles of the religion of Christ.

1. The power of the Gospel is seen in the nature of its instructions. The Gospel frowns upon and banishes those *pernicious maxims* of conduct, by which the peace of society is destroyed and communities are laid waste. The eager thirst for honor, the insatiable ambition which preys on many a mind, often leading to the commission of great crimes, and in a powerful monarch leading to the destruction of thousands or millions of lives in war, is not tolerated by the Christian morality. The honor which cometh from God, may be sought, but not the honor which cometh from man. In like manner the maxims of retaliation and revenge are condemned; and instead of being devoted to the busy cares of covetousness, occasioning injustice, fraud, and oppression, men are required to toil chiefly for incorruptible treasures.

Besides interdicting all false principles, the Gospel makes known and enjoins *right rules* of conduct, the observance of which by all men would completely change the face of human affairs. Were the precepts universally obeyed,—"As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them;" "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;"—much of the complicated machinery of government would be superseded and rendered useless. As no wrongs would be suffered, so there would be none to be redressed. Courts might be generally abolished; prison-houses pulled down; chains, and bars, and bolts thrown away. Wise legislators might certainly rest from many of their labors, together with scheming politicians and subtle statesmen; and the affairs of the world would go on prosperously without the pageantry of a court and a throne.

It is to be considered also that the gospel, in order to promote virtue, and consequently happiness, not only prescribes right rules of conduct, but also presents *motives* to obedience, powerful at all times and in all circumstances. The *fine-spun theories of* moralists relating to the beauty of virtue and the fitness of *things are at once brushed* away by any strong temptation. Even a regard to

present interest is often borne down by violent passion. But the gospel demands obedience with the threatening of everlasting punishment, and invites to holiness with the promise of everlasting joy and glory. Its influence is felt in all the conditions of our being, binding the soul in secret as well as in public, addressing with authority the reason and conscience, warning of a greater evil than death, and urging to the resolute performance of duty in the midst of scorn, obloquy, and persecution, with a firm confidence in the promised favor of the Almighty.

There is one peculiar principle of action inspired by the gospel of amazing efficacy; and that was announced by the apostle, when he said, "the love of Christ constraineth us." When the sinner, condemned and perishing, becomes a true believer in the crucified Son of God; when by faith he is redeemed, pardoned, justified; when he is led forth from his prison by the hand of his Savior, and through grace breathes the air of freedom; his heart swells with unutterable emotions of gratitude and love to his great Deliverer, and he is impelled to live, not unto himself, but unto Jesus Christ, who loved him and died for him. This is the principle which causes liberality to abound even in the depth of poverty; this is the principle which carries the missionary of the cross to the heathen, and the martyr to the stake, and which in every age since the gospel was made known has achieved wonders of beneficence that have surpassed the comprehension of a selfish world.

While the gospel produces the character of true virtue, it also confers permanent felicity on those who feel its influence. Under the unavoidable trials of their condition, in poverty, affliction, and sickness, it gives them submission to the correcting but merciful hand of God. The raging passions, which cause much of the misery of men, are quieted. The fury of the tempest is converted into a calm. The selfish toils of men are changed to honorable and joyous labors of charity, which bring their own reward with them.

But the gospel also inspires the loftiest hopes of good beyond the grave,—of new and perpetual discoveries of God's character,—of pleasures *which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the imagination conceived*,—of visions of the grace and mercy of Him who died for sinners, and who is altogether lovely,—and of communion with all that is venerable, and holy, and majestic in the universe. Under the inspiration of such hopes the Christian meets the king of terrors without dismay. He goes down into the grave, as the Ceylon diver after pearls plunges into the wave, with the certainty of coming up, loaded with treasures, to behold the splendors of heaven.

2. The gospel has already *wrought a great change* in the condition of the world, and when its influence shall be universal, all nations will be made virtuous and blessed. The power of the Christian religion, it is well known, has changed many of the evil customs of the world. It has abolished many cruel superstitions, and banished many enormous crimes; it has cast down the idols from their pedestals, and purified the temple of worship; it has mitigated the ferocity of war; it has broken the fetters of the slave; it has made provision for the poor, and established hospitals for the sick; it has promoted civilization, refinement, learning, charity, and every thing that tends to enlarge the mind and ennoble the character. In this country, which owes its form of government to the early Christians of New-England, it has created for ten millions of men free institutions, which are perceptibly spreading their leaven through the earth.

When the influence of the gospel shall be universal, the horrible superstitions

and crimes by which the earth is desolated, will no longer exist. There will be no more sacrifices of purity and of life in the service of idolatry. No man will be found lifting his hand against his brother. No covetous hard-hearted oppressor will catch the poor man in his net. There will be none who trade in the flesh and blood of their fellows. No throne of iniquity will be supported, no proud despot will reign over outraged and degraded subjects. When Jesus Christ shall have dominion *from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth*, there will be peace to all people; the rude and boisterous passions will be quelled; the tempest of war will no longer sweep over the globe; the King in Zion will *judge the poor of the people: he will save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor.* When the Son shall make men free, they will be *free indeed.*

Nor is there any other hope for the world. God is wiser than man. Infinite benevolence and wisdom have devised and disclosed the way of human improvement. The rational offspring of God must be assimilated to their Creator. Intelligent and moral agents must be enlightened by the truth, and persuaded to choose the right and to practise holiness. The perfect laws of the universe must be obeyed, or happiness will take its flight from the earth. Other hopes will fail. The fine-woven theories of perfectibility, not associated with religion, will prove but webs of gossamer. Even in our own country, the boasted intelligence of the people, if unallied to goodness, will be found inadequate to the security of the public welfare. If we stand before God as his enemies, with the stain of national crimes unavenged and tolerated, he will punish us; we shall have, like other nations, our retribution upon the earth; nor are the instruments of punishment difficult to be found; the angel of the pestilence may breathe upon us; the tempest may spread desolation; angry, ambitious spirits may dissever the bonds of our union; our fields may be reddened with blood. Should we be ripe for ruin, God cannot fail to find instruments for our destruction.

No; it is not by the wisdom of statesmen and legislators; it is not by civil institutions, by the checks and balances of the powers of government, by laws and courts, by armies and navies, that the peace, and order, and happiness of mankind can be secured, and crime and suffering banished from the world. By these the flame may be smothered for a while, but it will again burst out. These expedients have been tried, and what has been the result? The history of mankind is but the history of crime and misery. It is the history of cruel superstitions and debasing idolatries. It is the history of pride, envy, malignity, and ferocious ambition. It is the history of perpetual wars, by which fields have been ravaged, cities plundered and burnt, and countless millions of infuriated men swept from the earth. It is the history of crimes and iniquities of every hue; of inhuman oppressions and fiend-like tortures; of secret assassinations, and of more open and what are called honorable murders; of frauds, thefts, and robberies; of secret slanders, bitter revilings, and savage contests; of headlong gaming, besotting intemperance, profligate indulgence, and heaven-daring blasphemy. Make a true survey of the past history and the present condition of mankind, including our own favored country, and then say, whether there is any remedy for the miseries of the world but in the pure gospel of the Son of God?

1. It may be inferred from these considerations that we are bound to make *the most strenuous and unceasing exertions* to spread the gospel through the

world. The bonds of our common nature oblige us to this charity. Our Master says to us,—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." There is no way by which the lost children of men can be saved, except by the knowledge of *the truth;* and there is no appointed way by which the truth is to be spread through the earth, except by human effort. What if, in the spirit of Mahomedanism, we could send armies of well accoutred and brave Christians to all the nations, and with the alternative of conversion or death, subdue them to the Christian profession? Would this set them free from error and sin? What if, in the spirit of Romanism, we could subject all the tribes and families of man to the papal yoke, and impose on every forehead the Roman mark? This would not be conferring liberty. The beams of truth must come upon the darkness of the mind. Hence it is, that in our Protestant endeavors to propagate the gospel we send the Bible to the nations, and that we send out religious tracts,—those little lights, which revolve round the great central orb, the glorious sun in the firmament, the BIBLE. And hence it is, that we educate young men to explain the Bible, and that we send them out, not to make converts to a shadow,—not to baptize ignorance and superstition into the Christian name,—but to "*teach* all nations" the great truths and duties of the kingdom of Christ. For we believe that it is Christian truth, and that only, which can save men; not the knowledge of natural or political science, but the knowledge of the relation of man to God, of the law and government of God, of the mercy of God in the amazing scheme of redemption; of the judgment of the great day, and of eternal retribution; the knowledge of those truths which will subdue the violence of passion, and turn the energies of the soul from the pursuit of the low trifles of earth to the pursuit of the honor of God, of the welfare of immortal beings, and of the everlasting glories of heaven.

But these truths are to be communicated by the effort of man; and what it is the duty of the whole church to promote, it is the duty of every individual to promote according to his ability. It seems to be the purpose of God to accomplish all his great designs on the earth in such a manner, by the efforts of individual Christians, as to combine the perfection of their own character with the enlargement of his holy kingdom. This is the honor to which we are all invited,—to toil for God, and at the same moment to rise in resemblance to him and in preparation for the immortal bliss of his presence in heaven. Christians are to attain to new purity, elevation, and energy; and, as a sure consequence and glad reward they will see the cause of their Redeemer spreading and triumphing.

If money is requisite for the conversion of the world; the silver and the gold are God's. He might have touched the heart of one man in our country and from his single accumulations have poured, in the present year, into the treasury of Christian enterprise from ten to fifteen millions of dollars. But it was not the will of God in this manner to supersede the self-denying offerings of a multitude of believers, who are poor in this world, though rich in faith. Instead of such a splendid bequest we may look at a nobler spectacle, that of sixteen thousand poor *Moravians*, who at an annual expense equal to several dollars each, now support one hundred and thirty missionary establisments, originating in the purest benevolence, and conducted by a strong faith in the power of Jesus. Here is an example of obedience to the command of Christ;—a model for the imitation of the church. Shall not American Christians generally go and do likewise, and, in the proportion of their numbers and wealth, enlarge those holy enterprises, which send out truth and happiness to the world, and bring back to the conscience sweet peace *and heavenly* joy?

2. While the truth is communicated, the strength of the depravity, which it is designed to subdue, should impress us with *the necessity of divine power* to give efficacy to truth; and a view of the promises of God should lead us to seek and expect the exertion of that power. Whoever may plant or water, it is Jehovah only who giveth the increase. It is not light alone, though always necessary to moral action, which can change the heart. Is the devil ignorant of the great principles of Christianity? Is it supposable, that he can have any shadow of doubt, that Jesus Christ died upon the cross in order to expiate the sins of the world, and to destroy *his* works and kingdom? Yet he remains the adversary. And so it is with the heart of the sinner. Light may shame and may terrify him; but, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, it will not convert him. We see on the earth,—we see every day among respectable citizens, the same hostility to God's truth which rages in the world beneath; and it is indicated by contempt, scorn, ridicule, uncharitable surmises, malignant accusations, and flagrant acts of injustice. To rouse up by solemn words of terror a slumbering conscience, and to array conscience against unyielding pride, or any predominant and cherished sinful passion, is to enkindle the rage of the depraved heart; and the most humble and benevolent teacher of God's truth will be accused of priestcraft, of planning a union of church and state, of wishing to destroy political freedom, and to domineer over the imprescriptible rights of man. If such is the resistance to truth in a country where republican liberty protects the preacher from violence; in other countries the same resistance of the heart will arm itself with the power of persecution. How can the truth anywhere triumph without the interposing grace and converting energy of the Almighty? And that grace, we are assured, is adequate to the conversion of every sinner whose obstinate rebellion it may be the purpose of God to subdue. Let all Christians, then, pray most earnestly to God that he will cause his *kingdom to come.*

When Paul and Silas, in the dungeon at Philippi, prayed to God, the numerous prisoners heard the appeal of those righteous men to the Almighty, and immediately there was a great earthquake, which shook the foundations of the prison, and burst open the massy doors, while at the same moment every prisoner was disencumbered of his fetters. Good Christians! pray in earnestness to your God, and the great prison-house of idolatry, and delusion, and error, and iniquity in this world will tremble to its deep foundations; every strong, iron-bolted door will fly open; and the startled prisoners, dropping their chains, will rise up in astonishment, the *freemen* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. In the success, which has already attended missionary efforts, we have grounds of *encouragement* to engage with new zeal in the attempt to bring the whole world in sweet submission to the law of Christ. No one, acquainted with the history of the world, can be ignorant, that the efforts of Romanism have been very ineffectual in respect to the enlightening of the minds and the purifying of the hearts and lives of the heathen. The pope has long had at Rome a college for the propagation of the faith, and several of the sects and orders of Romanism have sent out missionaries to different parts of the world,—to Syria, to Egypt, to Ethiopia, to India, to China, to Paraguay, to Mexico, to Canada; and many of these missionaries have been men of learning, who wrote interesting descriptions of the countries they visited. But of all that has been accomplished by the Catholic missionaries on the face of the earth, scarcely a fragment of good *remains. The reason is,* that their system of new idolatry has not the capacity *of contending with more* ancient idolatry, and that their labors have not been

directed to the communication of the simple, uncorrupted truths of the gospel. A few Protestant missionaries in a small spot of the earth have within thirty years past accomplished more for the overthrow of idolatry and for the illumination and renovation of the dark-minded and depraved heathen, than all that has been accomplished, during three hundred years past, by all the missionaries which Romanism has employed. Do you doubt this? Repair then to an island of the Pacific ocean, and compare the present condition of its inhabitants with their depravity and wretchedness, before the English missionaries went to them with the message of God's mercy in the gospel, and you will now call it "an island of the blest." Or repair to another cluster of islands, occupied at a more recent period by our American brethren. The sudden change from horrible crimes to Christian virtue, from abject misery to pure and heavenly joy is almost too wonderful for belief. We have in the condition of these islands an emblem of the happy state of the world, when Jesus shall make all men free;—free from idolatry, superstition, error;—free from pride, ambition, malignity, avarice, and lust;—free from crime, and guilt, and wo.

But we need not limit our views to the islands of the Pacific. God has given animating success to our missionary labors in other parts of the world,—at Bombay, at Ceylon, and among various tribes of our own Indians. At the fifty-five missionary stations of the Board there are thirty-six churches as lights in a dark place, having eighteen hundred members, who seem to be walking in the fear of God. More than twelve hundred schools are supported, containing about sixty thousand scholars. Eight presses are at work in eleven different languages. Thus is the seed sown, which, we may confidently hope, will in good time yield an abundant harvest.—But are sixty-eight preachers, with their companions and assistants, the whole amounting only to two hundred and thirty-seven, all that our three thousand Congregational and Presbyterian churches, having *three hundred thousand communicants*, ought to send out for the conversion of the world? Is the average of one third of a dollar to each communicant the proper limit of our contributions for the holiest, sublimest, dearest, and most blessed of all objects?

The spirit with which we all should engage in the support of missions, and thus in the extension of the kingdom of Christ through the world, is the same spirit of faith which animated the apostles, the martyrs, and the reformers of Christianity; the same spirit which burned in the hearts of SWARTZ, of MAYHEW and ELIOT, of BRAINERD and WHEELOCK, of VANDER KEMP, BUCHANAN, and MARTYN, and many others, who have toiled for the conversion of the world.

Let us hope that a new spirit of heavenly zeal will be awakened in our churches. Let us hope, that the race of such men as NEWELL and HALL, of MILLS and PARSONS and FISK, of RICHARDS and WARREN, who have entered into their rest, will ere long be increased tenfold. Let us hope, that in a few years the missionaries from America shall go out as the faithful preachers of the gospel to all the nations of the earth. Even now our well educated, noble-minded young men, accompanied with the grace and loveliness of woman, may be seen mingling with the savages of our western forests, breathing the sultry air of Hindostan, walking in the cinnamon groves of Ceylon, ascending the long rivers of Burmah, knocking at the gates of China, climbing the volcanic hills of the Pacific islands, encountering the pestilential atmosphere of Turkey, and the hot gales of Malta, sitting amidst the ruins of Athens, and dwelling near the sacred mountain of Lebanon,—not for the gratification of their taste as travellers, but as the laborious, self-denying teachers of Christ's truth to their brethren.

But I had forgotten two, who are in a more interesting position than any of those, and who, for confiding in the integrity and good faith of our general government, and preaching the gospel to the Cherokees, are now grinding in the prison-house, not of some eastern despot, but of an American free state, of Christian Georgia, which was originally settled for the avowed purpose of *doing good to the Indians!* "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!"

Let us hope, however, soon to see many of our young men,—fearless of great trials, and even rejoicing if counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus,—passing the Rocky Mountains of the west, and penetrating the vast plains of the south; contentedly sharing with the Greenlander in his coarse and cold fare; reposing with the African in the shade of his palm-tree, or following, mounted on his camel, the hardy Moor in his marches through the desert; breathing the spices of Arabia, or wandering amid the flowering shrubs of Persia; accompanying the Tartar hordes in their migrations; passing the wall of China, and penetrating to the villages of its two hundred millions of people; approaching the throne of barbaric kings, and visiting the huts of the lowest of their subjects; gliding from island to island in all the seas of the east and the west; and everywhere assailing idolatry, conflicting with error, making known to men the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, and by instruction, example, and prayer, conducting their grateful, happy brethren in the way to glory, honor, and immortality. But for the accomplishment of such a hope every Christian must do his duty. And to this we are called by a voice from the perishing heathen, which says, By the love of Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven and died for you and for us, by the hope which ye cherish of awaking from the dead in his likeness, by the grace and mercy of God which ye have experienced, by the horrors of that awful destiny which ye have escaped, and by the glories of that eternal heaven which ye regard as your sure inheritance, we entreat you to send to us *the truth* as it is in Jesus, that we also may be made *free*. Then, with you and with all the redeemed from among men, a great multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall we stand before the throne and before the Lamb, and join in the loud song,—"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." AMEN.

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SERMON CXXXIII.

BY PARSONS COOKE,

WARE, MASSACHUSETTS.

THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS OF SIN.

Luke xxiii. 34.—*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!*

These words of Christ, which appear to have been uttered at the moment when the pains of the cross began, while they seem in one sense to extenuate the crime of his murderers, in another they aggravate it upon our view. While the Redeemer prays that their sin may be forgiven, on the ground that it was not committed against such an amount of conviction as to render it unpardonable, he clearly intimates that they are doing a deed of more tremendous guilt than they are aware. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, addressing these same murderers of Christ, improves upon the hint here given, and charges home upon them, with all his might, the guilt of having killed the Prince of Life; and then throws in the intimation, that through ignorance they had done it, and therefore their guilt, however great, was pardonable on their repentance. The prayer of the Savior in the text was in full harmony with the main design of his mission. The same words which convey the idea, that the sin of his murderers was of that class which might be forgiven, express as strongly as words can express the aggravated nature of their crime. *They know not what they are doing!* They know they are murdering a guiltless man, but his full innocence and worth they do not know. They know they are killing a prophet; but how much more than a prophet, they do not know. They know they are offending the God of heaven, but they do not know the high and awful nature of the offence;—do not know that every stroke of their wicked hands sends a pang to the heart of God's only Son.

In such a sense it is true of all sinners that they know not what they do. *Sin is quite a different thing in fact, from what it is in the general estimation of sinners.* This truth I shall in this discourse endeavor to illustrate, and carry round to different classes of sinners.

In order to do this I shall attempt to show, in the *first place, how* sinners come at their limited and inadequate views of sin;—In the *second place*, I shall show that their views of it *are thus limited*;—And, in the *third place, apply* the truth to different classes of sinners.

I. How do sinners come at their notion that sin is so trifling an affair. They form their estimation of it by false standards, and behold it in a very partial or imperfect light.

They have, in the first place, a very limited view of their own feelings and purposes, while in the course of sin, and infer that they cannot be very guilty because they *have never been conscious of a very evil intention.* In all their sins, perhaps, they do not remember of having once intended harm against God, or his kingdom. Though the constant feeling of their heart has been that it is a vain thing to serve God—though they have withheld their whole hearts from his service, and withheld obedience from every divine command —have treated God's authority with a contemptuous neglect—have cherished a settled alienation of feeling towards the holiness of God's character and government—and set up a thousand idols in the heart, they think their sin to be trifling, because they think they have meant no harm. They are so deceived as to think they have had no evil intention, and no feeling of opposition to God, when in fact the whole course of their affections has been opposed to his authority and government; when they have been hardening themselves against all the kindness of God, expressed in the gospel, and been wading recklessly through the currents of redeeming blood. They imagine they have done it all out of a feeling of mere good-nature, and that God will not be severe upon them for it.

Again—many derive their limited views of their sins from *their meager conceptions of the divine law.* They forget that God is a Spirit, spreading the wide canopy of his government over an empire of spirits, and bringing every thought and desire, as really as the doings of the hands and the motions of the tongue, under the control of his law. If a man would carry the impression that every coveting of what it would be sin to gain, is a high offence, and then bring up the remembrance of the ten thousand instances which every day's history would furnish of such coveting, he would no longer look upon his sin as a trifle. Forgetfulness of the holiness and goodness of the law, ministers also to the same levity of feeling on the subject of sin. If the law could be regarded as it is, as a transcript of the heart of God, or letting out of the feelings of infinite love, a barrier reared for the protection of our highest good, and standing between us and endless ruin, the offence against it would appear in some of its true colors of malignity. And, then if sin could be seen as it is opposed to God's character, as it comes out in the face of all his holiness and goodness, with a desire to dismantle his throne of every attribute that is lovely to holy beings, the sinner might have some idea of what he is doing. But overlooking these facts, and forgetting that God has an eye that looks in upon the heart, and throws daylight upon the most concealed purposes, he makes little account of what passes within. Though there should be a perpetual flow of that love of the world which is idolatry, a feeling of alienation from God, an aversion to all the forms of communion

with him, an inveterate quarrelling with the word, providence, and Spirit of God, and with the terms and methods of grace,—in short, though all the elements of heart rebellion should be in vigorous action, and though there be an entire want of affections pleasing to the eye that searches hearts, still the feeling is cherished that there can be no serious amount of sinfulness, where there has been no outrage upon external morality. Because men are not knaves and villians, they think they are not sinners. Because their offence touches not the interests of human society, they dream of little injury done to the commonwealth of spirits.

Again—others erect a bar to conviction of personal guilt out of materials taken from *infirmities incident to human nature.* They are conscious of being found wanting when brought up to the strictness of God's law. But this law they repeal, and construct one of their own which makes liberal allowances for the frailties of human nature; and when pressed on the subject of sinfulness, they are not prepared to feel it. If they have come short, and halted, and tripped now and then, it is no more than all others have done. It is the common infirmity of the species, and they feel as little sense of personal guilt as they do for not having the powers of angels. They think they have lived as uprightly as most of their neighbors, and cannot see why they should be called sinners, and urged so earnestly to repent.

Others diminish their conceptions of their guilt by *comparing themselves with greater sinners.* They see, perhaps, the majority of men in deeper wickedness than themselves, and hence conclude that their own sin is small. Instead of looking into the mirror of God's law, they measure themselves by the standard which a sinful world has set up. And by such a standard they are able to pronounce almost any decent course of life sinless. Instead of taking the number of the sins of which they have been guilty, they number the sins of their neighbors of which themselves are clear. They have not done a thousand things which others have, and therefore count themselves a thousand-fold less guilty than others. And this approaches in their estimation to entire innocence. Thus they prevent the commandment from coming home; they hinder all just apprehensions of guilt.

Sin appears very different according to the different *light and circumstances* in which it is seen. A man, in the midst of sinful associates, takes less account of sin than he does in the society of the godly. Sin, when seen from a dying bed, and an opening eternity, appears more dreadful than when death and the judgment are put far away. And still more dreadful and odious will it appear when the light of heaven pours upon it. If the sinner would conceive of his heart with all its concealed abominations laid open to the inspection, not of his fellow-men, but of the pure spirits of heaven, and look in upon it himself with such feelings as they possess—in other words, would the sinner accustom himself to estimate his sinfulness by the light of heaven, most surely would he abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes.

Again—*delay of punishment* goes to confirm men in the opinion that sin is a trifle. Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, men have not that dread of transgression which they otherwise would have. If every sin were followed immediately by its due visitation of God's displeasure, and that not behind the veil of eternity, but before our eyes, how would the world's opinion of sin be changed!

Again—the very *greatness of the punishment threatened*, is made an occasion of confirming men in the belief that their sins are small. They have satisfied themselves that they are not sinners, in such a sense as to deserve an eternal hell. And if such a punishment be threatened to sinners by a holy God, they feel that they cannot be of the number. They take it for granted that they have not deserved, and shall not receive an eternal punishment; and from such premises conclude, that if all impenitent sinners must perish, they are not such sinners.

II. Such are some of the means by which sinners come at the conclusion that their sin is a trifle. We come now to show, in the second place, that *their views of sin are exceedingly limited, or that sin is quite another thing in fact from what it is in the sinner's estimation.*

In the first place, it is very different *in its effects* from what they esteem it. They can form some adequate notion of the effects of sin when it bears palpably against the peace of society. When the thief and the assassin are abroad, they are awake to the mischiefs that are done. But they can conceive of no injury done by sin, so long as it is concealed in the heart. They cannot conceive of any one's interest suffering by their indulgence of worldly, unholy, and rebellious feelings. Grant that all within is opposition to God's government, who, they will ask, is injured by it? They are unaware that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of spirits, and that rebellion of spirit as effectually invades this kingdom as the fire and sword of civil war does an earthly realm. In both cases, the essence of the mischief consists of an attack made upon the rightful authority. And that we are unable to trace out with our eye all the mischievous effects of sins of heart on the peace and order of a universe of spirits, is no proof that no such effects exist. God is most competent to judge of this matter. If God be true, the judgment day will make such disclosures of the mischiefs done by sins of heart, as will cause a guilty world to stand aghast.

Again—sin is quite a different thing from what it is usually esteemed, if we consider the *state of heart which gives birth to it.* A man will swear profanely, and offer such insults to heaven as one would think would cause the earth to tremble under him—he will treat with marked neglect all the institutions of God; will make light of them, will scoff at them, and yet feel that all was done out of mere good-nature. But what would an angel think of the good-nature of him who could round his periods with wanton profaneness? What would he think of the amiable intentions of him who could neglect and abuse all that is precious in the gospel?—of him who is so alienated from the God of heaven as to cast off fear, restrain prayer, refuse obedience to every command, and hate every thing that brings a holy God to view?

Again—sin is quite a different thing in God's esteem from what it is in the sinner's. The views of sin which are every where advanced in that book of his, which we call the Bible, are wide from the views which sinners have. And I presume most sinners have felt a difficulty here—have been unable to see why the Bible should set forth sin in such deep and awful colors. One of the greatest difficulties they have found in believing the Bible has come from its making so serious a matter of sin. Now it is evident that such

widely disagree with God on this point. And it is a great unhappiness thus to disagree; for you cannot maintain your point in opposition to him. He is surely in the right; and he will one day make it appear, to your everlasting conviction.

Again—the *costly expiation* made for sin shows it to be no trifle. God has laid out no needless expense in the redemption of the world. But if the ill desert of sin is to be measured by the greatness of the sacrifice made to put it away, who can take its dimensions! We see what a deep and inflexible hatred God had for sin, when his own Son stood in the place of the sinner. If he then spared not his own Son, how heavy will be the visitation of his justice on you who have no claims to his compassion. If these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry!

Again—the *retributions of eternity* will make sin to appear quite another thing from what it is here esteemed. It is easy now for fools to make a mock at sin, for careless sinners to treat it as a trifle, for the lovers of pleasure to sing of peace, while they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. But let the light of eternity burst upon them, and they will harp another strain. When they see all the generations of the world crowding around the throne of judgment, and learn that the purpose of all the preparation and parade of that day is to make discoveries of sin—that God and all the peers of his realm are busied on questions respecting sin, that a universe have come from remotest corners to attend to developments of sin, they will begin to think it a matter of some importance. When they hear the last sentence break forth, and see it go into execution on themselves, when they come to look down into the hell in which they are to make their beds for ever, they will confess themselves mistaken. When all restraints shall be taken off from their sinful dispositions, and the fever of rebellious passion shall burn, being set on fire of hell, their notions of sin will be awfully changed.

III. Now, my fellow-sinner, is there not occasion for you to take up a solemn review of your character and conduct? If sin is a greater mischief than you are aware, you need to know it now. You cannot carry through eternity the notions you now possess. If you trust to them, they will fail you in an awfully trying hour. This is an impression which I wish to make on every heart. And the more effectually to do it, I shall endeavor, in the third place, to carry it round to different classes of sinners.

And here I would remark, in the first place, that *the profane swearer* is accumulating an amount of guilt of which he is little aware. The feelings of a pious man are always shocked by the utterance of a profane word in his hearing; and he wonders at the daring that can offer such affronts to heaven's majesty. And yet the views which the pious man has of the venerableness of the name of God, which make him shudder at every abuse of it, come not half way up to the reality—not half way up to what are entertained by angels that adore before the throne. If we could have their views of God, methinks the utterance of a profane word in our hearing would shock us like an earthquake. Surely then those who, without even a trifling cause, to add emphasis to an assertion, or to finish out some foolish jest, can call in that tremendous name, know not what they do.

And the same may be said of the sin of the *scoffer*, who sets his mouth against the heavens, and delights in deriding all the sacred things of God, and pouring

contempt on the Savior of the world. For it is not possible to conceive of a mind on this side of hell, armed with hardihood enough thus to challenge the thunders of the Almighty, while he fully knows what he is doing. It cannot be that the scoffer is fully aware who the God is whom he so wantonly insults—aware of his majesty and power, of his all-searching eye, and of his awful justice.

But we will come down to some sins of softer name. The man who leads a life of *sinful pleasure* is not aware of the greatness of his sins. While his heart is bound up in selfishness, and withheld from all obedience to God, he is not aware how numerous and weighty are the commands of God, each of which bears upon him every moment, and how great is the guilt of disobedience—he is unaware that a refusal to obey each and every command—such as to repent, to believe, to love, and others to the number of some scores, which are binding every moment—is a real offence, and that his sins are multiplying at the rate of scores in a minute, and that each of these sins are such as God will visit with righteous retribution,—unaware that he is wronging his own soul, and closing the doors of hope and salvation against himself—that he is degrading the faculties of an immortal nature, polluting the image of God by a slavery to lusts that are hateful to God—unaware that he that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth. Because the voice of public opinion is at variance from the voice which comes out from the sanctuary of God, and the world has no execrations for him, the man of pleasure finds it easy to overlook all the hurtful tendencies of his course, and to cradle his conscience into perpetual slumbers, while waging war against the heavens and against his own immortal interests.

Again—the *worshipper of Mammon* is treasuring to himself a load of guilt of which he is little aware. If he keeps himself from oppressive exactions and fraudulent bargains, he has little consciousness of sin. He overlooks the injury done in withdrawing his whole heart from God, in rendering to Mammon the affection that is due to his Maker; in distracting with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, a heart that ought to be filled with enterprises that take hold on heaven; in bringing down to a base alliance with the dust the aspirations of an immortal spirit; in wearing away a day of grace in sordid accumulations. He knows not what starvation of spirit he is bringing upon himself, while he is so busy in making provision for the flesh. He knows not what loss he is incurring while gaining the whole world, but losing his own soul.

Again—those who are spending *the season of their youth* in the neglect of the one thing needful, know not the folly and the sin of which they are guilty. They know not the preciousness of those invitations which express the Savior's peculiar concern for the young, and which they are neglecting. They know not the force of the command, to remember their Creator in the days of youth—they know not the value of early piety, which they treat as so little worth—what precious opportunities they are wasting—how far they are putting from them the words of everlasting life—how impenitence grows more obstinate by age—what a fearful series of dangers beset the paths of youth—how much they grieve the Holy Spirit—what light and love they are resisting—what amount of guilt they are incurring—with what regrets they will look back upon this golden season wasted—when conscience shall be

roused in after life, if it ever is roused. They know not but that a whole eternity will be spent in bootless wailings that the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and they are not saved.

Again—sinners know not what they do when they *refuse to love* our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely they think if they do nothing worse than this they shall do well. And yet what can be worse? Says an inspired apostle, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha, accursed when the Lord shall come. As if this were a capital crime, he pronounced on it the sentence that was wont to be pronounced upon capital offenders.

Again—those who resist and grieve the *Holy Spirit* know not what they do. This is a sin that is aimed most directly against the life of the soul; for the Holy Spirit is the immediate agent of all divine life, the comforter, the messenger of all spiritual communications. To hear and resist the gospel only, is a sin of deep malignity. It is ungrateful and cruel to resist invitations so full of mercy, sent by common messengers from the Savior: but it is more to resist the Holy Spirit, and deny him the admittance which he seeks into the heart. When the conscience is roused to action, when the sinner feels something within, urging him to give up his heart to God, when the resolution to do it begins to rise, he feels it a small matter to suppress it. But if he does it, he does a deed whose enormity he knows not now, but he will know hereafter.

But the time would fail me to go over the subject in all its broad extent, and tell all the ways which seem right to a man, the end whereof are the ways of death. Let me say, then, to every sinner, You know not what you do. It seems now a light thing to put off the authority of God, and neglect all the overtures of a great salvation. You think you have on hand business of more pressing importance than that of the soul. You count it a trifle to procrastinate the preparation for another world, to reject the counsels of God, to abuse the love of a Savior, to jeopard all the interests with which the immortal part is freighted. But what now seems a trifle, will one day stand out before you a substantial and amazing reality. In eternity you will see with other eyes. Those sinners who drove the nails through the hands and feet of the Redeemer, thought at the time of doing nothing but piercing a piece of beggarly flesh. But what consternation must have overtaken them, when they came to see the nail-prints that themselves had made, in that glorious body that fills heaven's throne? And you who are now crucifying the Son of God afresh, think perhaps of little harm. But what will you think when the opening of the eternal day shall expose the tremendous result!

Think not that the plea of ignorance will shield you then. Whence does this ignorance come, but from neglect of consideration and from wilful blindness? Your unconsciousness of the evil you are doing is a part of your sin. This is that hardness of heart because of which the Savior is grieved. Vain will be the hope of going from this land of Bibles and Sabbaths, and setting up the plea at the bar of God that you did not know what you was doing. The plea of ignorance amid so many means of knowledge would of itself condemn you. What! did you not know that these things were so, when God has come all the way from heaven to earth to tell you, and has told you in ways so multiform, and so often and long repeated!

But after all, though you have been to a great degree unconscious of the facts

before you, you have known enough to condemn you. "This is the condemnation that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." You will find in the other world charges against you not only for resisting light, but for violating your own convictions. "*Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.*"

"These are the words to which the harps of grief
Are strung; and to the chorus of the damned
The rocks of hell repeat them evermore;
Loud echoed thro' the caverns of despair,
And poured in thunder on the ear of wo."

SERMON CXXXIV.

By SILAS M'KEEN,

BRADFORD, VERMONT.

SINNERS ENTREATED TO SEEK THE SAVIOR.

ISAIAH lv. 6.—*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.*

MAY that Spirit, who inspired this urgent exhortation, now enlighten the mind and warm the heart, and give holy energy to the speaker; and attend the declaration of truth with renovating power. In him be my confidence, while, under an affecting sense of the worth of souls, I attempt to show,

I. How we should seek the Lord;

II. What is here meant by finding the Lord;

III. And at what time the Lord may be found.

I. In what manner we are required to seek the Lord.

The Lord reveals himself to us, in the context, in the endearing character of a gracious Savior from sin and wo; and it is in that respect, especially, that he is to be sought. Nor may we suppose that every kind of seeking will be successful. We must seek him in a proper manner, in the exercise of right views and affections, or we shall experience the disappointment of those to whom it was said, "Ye shall seek me and shall not find me." "Ye ask and receive not; because ye ask amiss."

To seek the Lord aright *we must believe that he is such a Savior as he is declared to be in the Holy Scriptures.* "He that cometh unto God must believe that he is; and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him." If we believe that he is the Savior of sinners at all, we ought to believe that he is entirely such as he is revealed to be in the scriptures; for they are the only source of information on this subject. The works of creation, indeed, declare there is a God, eternal, and every where present; almighty, infinitely wise

and good; but they do not reveal him to us as the Savior of lost and perishing men. Were it not for the holy scriptures, we must, in regard to this, be altogether in darkness; and if we admit their truth as far as to believe that Christ is a Savior at all, we are bound to believe that he is altogether such as these lively oracles declare him to be; and as such we must seek him. In particular, we must believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of men; that he has made an atonement, altogether sufficient for all who shall ever come to him; that while salvation is wholly of grace, it is to be obtained only in the way of obedience to the gospel; that Christ is sincere in all his invitations, and will certainly save all who comply with the terms on which salvation is offered; and that he is in all respects worthy of the highest love and firmest confidence of every heart; for surely he is thus represented in the divine word. Now are these your views of Christ, and of the way of salvation which he has revealed?

But, to seek the Lord in a right manner, it is not enough to have an orthodox belief concerning his character. *We must realize our personal need of his salvation.* A general belief, that Christ is the Savior of men, can never induce us to seek him until we are deeply conscious of our personal need. Suppose the chief magistrate of our country should issue a proclamation that, on a given day, he would freely pardon all who were guilty of treason, in case they would appear before him, confess their crime, and implore his forgiveness; it is manifest that before any would comply with the terms, they must not only believe in his authority and faithfulness, but also feel that they were guilty of the crime specified; and consider a pardon of high importance. But to feel our need of an interest in Christ, we must be convinced that we have transgressed the divine law, and are justly condemned by it; that we can make no satisfaction to divine justice for our sins; and that except we are saved by the Lord Jesus, wholly in a way of grace, we must for ever lie down in sorrow. And, my hearers, are you now impressed with a conviction of these truths? Are you conscious of your personal need of salvation from sin and condemnation, and that if Christ does not help you speedily, you must perish in your guilt? These convictions must sink deep into your hearts, before you will be induced to come to Jesus.

But all this is not enough. *We must be willing, nay, anxiously desire, to embrace Christ as our Savior, in his entire character and on his own terms.*

If we are not disposed to embrace the Savior on his own terms, just as he is offered to us in the gospel, we certainly deceive ourselves if we think we are in the way to find him. He has revealed the only way in which it is consistent with his glory to save us; and as he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, he surely will never propose any other terms. If we so much as ask or expect him to save us in any other way, we directly insult him. And if we properly seek him to save us in his own way, it must be with the *heart;* for without that faith which worketh by *love*, it is impossible to please him. "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness;" "ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart.*" To search for the Lord with all our heart, implies not only the greatest earnestness in seeking, but a disposition to receive him cordially when we shall find him. If we have no such complacency in the Lord Jesus, if we feel no such disposition to yield heartily to his authority, but apply to him merely

from selfish considerations, surely he must look on us and on all our pretensions to seek him with abhorrence. He searches the heart, and cannot be deceived with false appearances. And whenever we are heartily willing to embrace him, we shall, of course, be truly penitent for our sins, and sincerely wish to be saved from them all; we shall be sensible of the imperfection of our best services, and realize our need of Christ to be our mediator; we shall have a supreme regard for the commandments of Christ, and desire to live in obedience to them all; we shall have a relish for communion with Christ, and wish to dwell eternally in his presence, and shall say with David, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Thus contemplating the Savior's character, realizing our need of him, and feeling willing and earnestly desirous to embrace him, just as he offers to be our Savior; we shall ardently seek him in the reading of the holy scriptures, which testify of him; in conversation with those who have found him to be precious; in fervent prayer, where no eye, saving that which seeth in secret, beholds us; and in the solemn assembly where the glorious gospel is preached, and the prayers and the praises of the people of God go up like incense before the throne. Nor can we ever, under the influence of such views and feelings, cease from seeking this blessed Redeemer, until we have found him, and are assured of his saving kindness.

II. What is meant in the text by finding the Lord?

To find the Lord Jesus, in the sense of the text, is to obtain such a spiritual view of his character as is peculiar to those who embrace him; it is to find by experience that he is such a glorious and blessed Savior as he is declared to be in the scriptures. One blind from his birth may be taught to describe, correctly, the appearance of the spangled canopy above him, and the variegated beauty and sublimity of the scenes of earth; but a true impression of this visible grandeur and beauty he can never feel, can never be made to know, until his own eyes are opened to behold them. In like manner to hear the blessed character of the Savior and the benefits to be derived from him declared, and to find the declaration true by happy experience, are very different things.

If you ever find the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you will find that he is, and ever has been, acquainted with your heart and all your ways. The Samaritan woman who conversed with him at the well, said to her friends, "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" And every believer will exclaim with David, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."

You will find, too, that he is perfectly holy, and looks on sin with infinite displeasure. And this view of his holiness and glory will humble you in the dust before him. When Isaiah had a view of the Savior's glory, and heard the seraphim crying one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts:" he exclaimed, "Wo is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." In like manner Job, when he had been communing with the Almighty, said, "I have heard of thee by the

hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

You will, nevertheless, find the Savior to be most benevolent and merciful. While others talk of divine mercy, none but the contrite sinner can rightly understand its nature or estimate its worth. The true penitent is impressed with a sense of the holiness and glory against which he has sinned; he is penetrated with a conviction of his deep criminality; and, therefore, cannot think of that mercy which has hitherto saved him from hell, but with deep emotions of gratitude. And when he considers that he has not merely been spared, but that pardon and life eternal have been continually offered him; that the gate of glory is yet open before him, and God his Savior ready to receive him; then he begins to comprehend with all saints what is the "breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God." To whom much is forgiven, the same will love much.

Those who find the Savior will find him worthy of the highest love, the firmest confidence, and the most entire obedience. Christ has said, "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." Nor will these sayings seem hard to those who attain to a spiritual knowledge of him: for they perceive that, he is "God manifested in the flesh;" that in him "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily;" that he is "God over all blessed for ever;" that he "is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." Therefore they cheerfully surrender to him their hearts, confide in his declarations, and bow to his authority; they consecrate to him both soul and body; and while dwelling on earth, join with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, in heaven, saying, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

If you find the Savior, you will find that he is a portion sufficient to satisfy the most enlarged desires of the soul. You have sought happiness elsewhere; it has seemed within your reach; but you have been continually disappointed. "It has been as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite." But whenever you find the Savior, your wearied spirit will rest in him with entire satisfaction. Then you can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." "Thou art my portion." Thou art to me "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Thou art "my Savior and my God." And in seasons of deep distress, when all the streams of earthly comfort are failing, you may say with Habakkuk, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; yea, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Surely the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is, is blessed indeed. The source of his happiness is as permanent as the being and immutability of God. It is far above the changes

and calamities of this transitory world. Even when the cold chills of death shall paralyze his nerves, and the dread realities of eternity shall rise up in near prospect; his heart shall still be warm with the love of Christ; and his faith shall rest immovable on the promises; and his soul, shaking off dull mortality, shall look away into the untried scenes of futurity with strong desire to depart and be with Christ for ever. And through eternity, Christ will be the portion of his people; they will for ever rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Men may be told of all these things, they may assent to their truth, but they can have no experimental knowledge of them, until they humbly seek the Savior; and learn for themselves how precious he is to them that believe. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned."

III. At what time may the Savior be found?

"Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found.*" If you were earnestly invited to go in to a public entertainment *while the doors were open*, you would naturally receive the impression that they were soon to be closed; and if you desired to go in at all, would think it important to embrace the favorable opportunity. If you were groaning with broken limbs, and should be urged by a friend to send for an eminent surgeon *while he might be obtained*, you would readily receive the idea that at a future hour he might not be obtained; and would doubtless wish immediate application to be made. In like manner, when entreated to "seek the Lord while he may be found," we ought to believe that the time is coming when he can no more be found as a Savior; and if we hope to find him in that capacity at all, should be excited to call upon him "while he is near."

But at what time may the Lord be found? The sinner, in the present life, is under a dispensation of mercy; and is assured that, if he repents and comes to Christ, he shall be saved. Let his sins be ever so aggravated; if he truly repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus, he shall find mercy. Saul the cruel persecutor; Manasseh, who drenched the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the thief on the cross, may all be adduced in confirmation of this. Stout-hearted and far from righteousness as they had been, they all became contrite; and humbly, earnestly, and successfully sought the divine forgiveness while it was attainable. To all men in the present life, the Savior's invitation is, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." "He that believeth hath everlasting life."

But when persons are removed from this to the eternal world, their season of probation is terminated. Those who have sought and found the Lord will there be made welcome to the joys of his kingdom, and those who neglected to seek him will have no Savior; but, under the weight of their guilt, and the wrath of God, will sink into an abyss of wo, where the voice of mercy will never be heard, nor the hope of mercy ever come. That the Lord Jesus will not be found in the character of a Savior by any impenitent man, after death, is most evident from his own warnings and solemn declarations. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the master of the house

is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall say, I tell you I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These are the declarations of the faithful and true Witness, the Judge both of the living and the dead. That awful portion of the divine word found in the first chapter of the Proverbs, will, after death, be entirely applicable to all the wicked; and they must learn by woful experience what it means: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

This life, then, furnishes our only opportunity to seek the Lord with success. Here the great work of securing salvation must be performed; or eternally remain unaccomplished. And what is this life? Think of its narrow bounds; think of its speedy flight; of its liability every moment to be terminated; and of the tremendous consequences to you, should yours be terminated before you have secured the favor of the Lord Jesus; and be excited to seek him "before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death."

But, were we sure this life would be prolonged for many years, yet in the course of it some seasons are peculiarly favorable to the great business of seeking salvation; and it most deeply concerns us to seize and improve them. In the first place, the season of youth presents a most favorable opportunity to seek the Lord. Then the heart is not so hardened and vicious as it may be in subsequent life. It must, indeed, be admitted, that the hearts of the young, while unrenewed, are destitute of holiness, and strongly inclined to evil. This makes it difficult even for them to seek the Lord, and consecrate themselves to his service. Perhaps, my young friends, you have learned something of this by experience. When you once thought seriously of coming to Christ, did it not seem difficult to forsake the alluring paths of sin? Did you not find it hard to break away from your vain and worldly associates; to subdue the pride, envy, and sensuality of your hearts; to confess your faults to those you have injured, and all your sins to God; and to consecrate yourselves for ever to his service? If so, be assured these duties will never become easier. The disease of sin, which has already exhibited such alarming symptoms, is continually extending itself, and growing more inveterate. If a cure is ever to be effected, now is the best time to seek it. Or, to use another illustration; if, when your moral existence commenced, you launched on that current of time which is rolling silently downward to the ocean of a dark and miserable eternity; the farther you suffer yourself to be borne along, the more difficult will be your return; and it deeply concerns you to make an

immediate and strenuous effort to escape, before the current shall grow stronger, and the roar of the last tremendous cataract shall convince you that all is lost; and overwhelming fear shall cause your heart to sink and die within you. Now you have special encouragement to cry to the great God your Savior for help. Now he calls, "Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Son, give me thy heart. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you. Yea, I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." He does not overlook the little children, but says, "Suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." None of you who are capable of understanding that, to come to Christ is to love and serve him, are too young to comply with his invitation. O, come to him now; before you shall grow more depraved and hardened; before the cords of your sins shall bind you more firmly; and your time shall be shorter and your condemnation heavier; and the Almighty shall be more highly incensed against you. Now, *now*, beloved youth, is your time to seek the Lord with hope of success.

Again—while persons are favored with the means of religious instruction, and the exercise of reason, they should, with all earnestness, seek the Lord. The greater part of our race, destitute of divine revelation, are involved in the darkness of heathenism; they know nothing of Christ or his salvation; nothing of heaven with its glory, or hell with its horrors. How then can they seek the Lord? "How shall they call on him of whom they have not heard?" Some, too, once favored with the instructions of pious parents and faithful ministers, now dwell in the solitary wilderness where no voice is heard proclaiming salvation; or in the licentious village where no Sabbath is hallowed, and no influence of Christianity is felt; or in the obscure lanes and sequestered abodes of crime and wretchedness in great cities, which have long been overlooked or despaired of, by those whose business is to win souls to Christ; or, perchance, their home is on the wide waters, where no voice of admonition or prayer is heard, and religion is mentioned only to be ridiculed. And some, once blessed with the full exercise of reason, are now delirious on the bed of death, or wandering about in idiocy; or, having become dangerous to society, are confined in the cage of the maniac. And are you sure that similar disasters will never befall you; that you shall never be as far removed from the light of the gospel and means of salvation, as any whose case has been named? O, tempt not the Almighty to recall the price he has put into your hands to get wisdom; and to swear in his wrath you shall never enter into his rest.

Especially is it a precious opportunity to seek the Lord, when his work is revived in your neighborhood, and your own mind is impressed with divine truth. Then it is comparatively easy to break away from the entanglements of sin; to inquire of those more experienced the way of salvation; and to go with those who are pressing into the kingdom of heaven. Then the Lord is graciously near; and every humble suppliant may approach him with filial confidence. Thrice happy the people thus favored. "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

Perhaps some of you are thinking, "Could I once more enjoy such advantages as I have misimproved, could I go back to the days of my youth, or be favored with the instructions and prayers of my parents, or hear the voice of that faithful minister who wore out his life in seeking my conversion; or could I once more live in any place where sinners are awakened, and in great numbers turning to God, I would esteem it a great privilege indeed; and would certainly endeavor to seek the Lord with all my heart." However that might be, it is certain that your misspent opportunities can never return. Those of you who are advanced in years can never go back to the days of early youth, and recover the advantages you have lost. Those of you who have followed those pious parents and that minister to the grave, who once and again so earnestly besought you with tears to come to Christ, cannot reanimate their decayed forms, or bring down their blessed spirits from their celestial seats, to counsel and entreat you again. And those of you who have lived through one revival of religion after another, impenitent and unconverted, have reason to fear that God will not prolong your lives to another such precious season; or if he should, you may only behold it with your eyes, while your heart shall feel no interest in it. The situation of all who have hitherto neglected salvation has now become exceedingly critical and alarming; but still you are prisoners of hope, and not of despair, and now is the time for you to make perhaps your only effort to escape damnation, and to lay hold on eternal life. Great difficulties may appear in your way; but great as they are, you must meet and surmount them, or lose your soul. If you are conscious of your own weakness and frailty, then cry mightily unto God for help.

Do some of you say, We can find no time to attend to these things? No time! Why do you not say when hungry, I have no time to eat; or when thirsty, I have no time to drink? Why do you not say when languishing with disease or tortured with agony, I have no time to seek for health or ease? All this you might do, with less absurdity than to plead that you have no time to seek salvation. For "what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" He would, even in that case, part with it at an infinite loss. But who of you can expect to gain the whole world, or even any considerable part of it? Alas! how low then the ambition, how grovelling the thoughts of such as put their souls in jeopardy for a treasure which moth, or rust, or fire may consume!

But think not only of the folly, but the imminent danger of delaying to seek the Lord. While you delay, your guilt is accumulating; your condemnation is growing more and more aggravated, and life is hastening to its termination. Even now the fatal arrow may be aimed at your heart; the sword of divine justice may be uplifted to cut you off. By the terrors of the Lord, then, we beseech you to flee from the wrath to come.

But if you are not to be moved by any rational consideration of danger, yet suffer the goodness of God to melt you into penitence. It was he who gave you that body, so fearfully and wonderfully made; and that soul which allies you to angels. It is he who has nourished and clothed you; who has sustained you in adversity; and redeemed your life from destruction, when the shades of death were collecting about you. He has given his Son to die for you, his word to teach you, his Spirit to strive with you. It is his own kind voice which is now heard out of heaven, calling you to seek him while

he may be found. And are you willing to offend such a benefactor; to spurn from you all his offers of mercy? You say, No.

But *when* will you seek the Lord? To-morrow? Next year? In a dying hour? And do you think this a good resolution? What! a good resolution, not to repent now, as God commands? A good resolution, not to seek the Lord now, while he may be found? A good resolution, to persevere in sin as long as you can with impunity?

Behold, *now* is the accepted time; now the Lord is graciously near; and if you delay to seek his favor this day, this hour, both heaven and earth, and your own conscience also, must confess the justice of God, should he call you no more, but leave you to perish in your iniquity. Is it your resolution to seek him *now* with all your heart? May the Spirit of grace strengthen that resolution, and help you to seek the Lord with right views of his character, deeply sensible of your misery, and anxiously desiring to embrace him in his entire character, and on his own terms, as your Savior, your God, and everlasting portion. Think not that the Spirit will always strive with you; that God will always be entreating you; or that you can, either now or at any other time, deceive him with heartless services. In a matter of such infinite moment, there must be no misgiving, no hypocrisy, no delay; "for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

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SERMON CXXXIV.

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THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOD OF THE INFIDEL.

Psalm lxxxvi. 8.—*Among the gods, there is none like unto thee, O Lord.*

The existence of a God is a fundamental principle of all religion. The mind, whenever this doctrine is presented to it, instantly perceives that it is grasping an idea of immense importance; and that, before it has paused to survey its momentous and infinitely extended bearings. But when considered in its relations to the material and the immaterial world, to every object in the wide range of thought, it gathers an interest which the mind, in its loftiest aspirings, is inadequate to comprehend; being a sort of dividing line between the territories of light and the territories of darkness; between a region illumined by the acknowledgment of the active presence of a God, and a region over which hang the clouds, and shadows, and curses of Atheism.

But it must be acknowledged that, while the existence of a God lies at the foundation of all religion, this momentous truth derives much of its importance from the character which is attributed to him. Laying out of view the gods of the heathen, to which our text may be supposed to have had especial reference, we all know that the Supreme Being has been invested with a variety of character by those who have professed their belief in the spirituality of his nature. I purpose in this discourse to bring before you *the God of the infidel, and the God of the Christian;* and to inquire *which is most likely to exalt the character of man; which best adapted to meet his necessities.*

I. *Let us compare the God of the infidel and the God of the Christian.*

1. The infidel's God is a being of *uncertain attributes:* the character of the Christian's God is *fixed and certain.*

If you cast an eye through the records of deism, you can hardly fail to be struck with the fact that there are scarcely two individuals who acknowledge the same God. Some of them have conceived of the divine Being in a manner imperfect indeed, but in some degree just; have uttered sublime senti-

ments both in respect to his attributes and his works, and have even seemed to feel some lofty aspirations in contemplating his character. There are others whose conceptions on this subject are more inadequate and gross, and who, while they profess to acknowledge the spirituality of God, invest him with properties or attribute to him actions which are scarcely consistent with it. And there are others still, who, though they will admit in the general the divine existence, yet seem scarcely to recognise the difference between nature and nature's God; leaving it doubtful on which side they stand of the line that divides deism from atheism. And not only is there a sad disagreement on this subject between different individuals, but the views of the same individual are often, in a high degree, inconsistent and contradictory. I say then that the infidel's God is a being to whom no fixed character belongs. Some things indeed on this subject all infidels hold in common; but there are so many particulars in which they disagree, and withal so much self-contradiction, that if we should attempt to describe minutely the object of the infidel's professed homage, we should seem to describe not one God but "gods many."

Not so with the being whom the Christian worships. Whether we look at each of the various attributes of which his character is composed, or at the whole in glorious combination, we see the indubitable impress of certainty. There is much indeed in this character, which the human mind is, and for ever will be, too limited to grasp; nevertheless, so far as its knowledge extends, it is accurate and certain. Hence we find that in every clime, in every age, the God whom Christians adore is the same;—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Nor is this difference between the God of the infidel and the God of the Christian difficult to be accounted for. For the infidel depends for his knowledge solely upon the deductions of his own reason; a guide which is often bewildered or bribed through the influence of passion; and which in its best state sheds but an imperfect light on the character of the Highest. The Christian, on the other hand, has the object of his supreme homage faithfully described;—described by the very hand of Almighty God: and the description is so plain that an honest mind can never mistake it. Is it strange that the infidel's God should have no fixed character, when it is left to human reason to decide what his character is? Or is it strange that the Christian's God should be everywhere and at all times the same, when it is remembered that *his* character is matter of infallible record?

2. The God of the infidel is *little more than a mere distant spectator of events:* the God of the Christian is *everywhere, in the exercise of a sustaining, controlling and gracious energy.*

The being whom the infidel calls God, if we can believe the infidel's own representations, reposes in a kind of indolent majesty, exercising but little regard towards the works of his hands. He is indeed supposed to have established some general laws for the government of his creation; but these laws are commonly spoken of in a manner which scarcely seems to imply a lawgiver, and as if they were left to execute themselves. It may be admitted that he takes some cognizance, and exercises some interest in respect to the grander events which occur both in the physical and moral world; that he keeps the planets in their orbits, and guides the revolutions of empires: but with the lesser and every-day concerns of life it is supposed that he has little

to do. His providence, instead of implying a divine energy diffused everywhere, and operating in every thing, is, at best, a sort of indefinite superintendence of his works, which may leave even man himself to become the sport of accident. And the reason of this is, that the infidel in this respect forms his idea of God from looking into his own bosom: he finds there a spirit of abominable arrogance, which disdains every thing in which he cannot fancy something of greatness or majesty; and he attributes the same character to the object of his professed homage.

The Christian's God, on the other hand, not only fills all space, but fills it with an active and controlling energy. Like the God of the infidel, he has established general laws for the regulation of his empire; but this does not supersede his unremitting vigilance, and care, and activity. He is present in all worlds to control the events of each; and while the whole system of things moves on exactly in accordance with the dictates of his will and of his wisdom, his regards are as intensely fixed upon the destiny of the obscurest individual, or even upon the unfolding of a flower or the motion of an atom, as if it were the only object to engross his infinite mind. True it is his energy that wheels around the planets; that thunders in the storm; that empties the volcano; that blazes in the lightning; that breathes in the wind; but it is alike his energy that sustains the beating pulse of the humblest child of want, that keeps *you* in existence from hour to hour and moment to moment; that operates in every thing that presents itself to you either as an object of sense or of thought. As nothing is too grand, so nothing is too insignificant for his eye and his providence to reach. The worm that creeps upon his footstool, and the angel that burns before his throne, are alike within the range of his vision, within the control of his arm, within the circle of his regard. He is arrayed not only in the majesty of infinite wisdom and infinite power, but also in the majesty of infinite condescension.

3. The God of the infidel we can contemplate only *in his abstract perfections:* the attributes of the Christian's God *are imbodied in the person of Jesus Christ.*

There are two ways in which the infidel may form his conclusions in respect to the character of God. He may carefully inspect the elements of his own intellectual and moral nature, and may find in them some faint resemblance to some of the divine perfections. For instance, his idea of power or of knowledge is originally obtained by reflecting upon the operations of his own mind; and by indefinitely magnifying these qualities as they exist in himself, he attains to a conception of the omniscience and the omnipotence of God. Or else he looks abroad upon the divine works, and surveys their harmony, their grandeur, their adaptation to their various ends, and hence forms his opinion of the character of him who built and who preserves this stupendous fabric. Now I admit that all this is fair and legitimate argumentation; and I do not deny that in either of these ways it is possible to arrive at just conclusions in respect to some of the divine perfections. But I maintain that the attributes of God, viewed merely in this light, are clothed with a sort of abstraction, which is fitted rather to make the mind pause and reflect upon its own littleness, than to bring its powers into exercise in acts of intense and grateful homage.

But Christianity entirely relieves this difficulty. The Christian's God comes out as it were from behind the veil of his abstract perfections, and

brings himself directly in contact with our thoughts and feelings, I had almost said with our very senses, in the person of Jesus Christ. Here God is manifest in the flesh: the divine glory, as it shines in the face of his Son, is so softened, that we can gaze upon it without being overpowered by the vision. The actions of a God we can here view; the attributes of a God we can here contemplate; the authoritative declarations of a God we can here listen to, through the medium of a nature like our own. Oh, what condescension is here! Without diminishing aught from the majesty of the eternal and uncreated Spirit, Christianity brings that majesty, if I may be allowed the expression, within the immediate range of human vision; for "in Him," that is, in Jesus Christ, says the apostle, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

4. The God of the infidel is *at best only the God of nature and providence:* the God of the Christian is *also the God of redemption.*

To the former let as much of perfection be attributed as reason can possibly conceive: be it that the infidel's God has made the heavens and the earth; that all that is beautiful, and grand, and useful in creation is the work of his hand. Be it that He rules the worlds which he has made by a providence, no matter how particular; that by his immediate agency he circulates the vital fluid in your veins, and arranges the most minute circumstances of your condition, and takes cognizance of every thing that passes within his dominions—though this is attributing more to the infidel's God than the infidel would himself attribute to him—but surely this is all. It is not even claimed for Him that He is a redeeming God. If the fact that man is a sinner is contemplated at all in the plan of his government, it is contemplated only as a sort of accidental matter which requires no distinct provision.

The Christian's God possesses every perfection and performs every work which the infidel attributes to *his* God. He is the creator of the ends of the earth, and he fainteth not, neither is weary, in upholding all things by the word of his power; and there is not a sparrow that falls to the ground, nor a leaf that trembles in the breeze, but his providence extends to it. But in addition to all this, and beyond all this, he is the God of redemption. In this character he exhibits himself in the mysterious threefold relation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In this character there is a new and more magnificent display of his attributes; a softening of those which appeared stern, a blending of those which seemed opposite, justice and holiness and faithfulness and mercy, all beaming forth in man's salvation. Here, after all, is the grand distinction between the God of the infidel and the God of the Christian. The one is, and the other is not, encircled with the glory of a Redeemer. The one is, and the other is not, reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ.

II. Keeping this contrast of character in view, let us proceed to inquire *whether the infidel's or the Christian's God is best adapted to exalt the character of man;* and *to meet his necessities.*

1. Which is best adapted to *exalt the human character?*

That we may come to a satisfactory conclusion on this point, let us see whether a belief in the one or the other is fitted to exert the *greatest amount* of influence.

That a belief in the Christian's God is the more influential is evident from *the fact that He is a Being with whom man is brought into more immediate*

contact. Of two objects, other things being equal, that exerts the most powerful influence, which bears most directly upon our condition, which mingles itself most with our thoughts, and operates upon us most constantly, and meets us in the greatest variety of circumstances. But we have seen that the infidel's God is a being who takes comparatively little interest in human concerns; that he is too lofty to condescend to the meaner affairs of this world, and is clothed with a degree of abstraction which seems to remove him almost beyond the range of human conceptions. We have seen, on the other hand, that the Christian's God meets him everywhere; that He is the strict observer of all his actions; that he marks even the most secret feelings of his heart with reference to a retribution; that in infinite condescension he manifests himself through the medium of man's own nature; and that the whole scheme of his government in respect to redemption is fitted to keep the eye of man intensely fastened upon the character of God. Who then can doubt that a belief in the God of the Christian is the most operative?

Then again, a belief in the Christian's God exerts the greatest amount of influence, because *there is far more in his character to make an appeal to the active principles of our nature.* Take, for instance, the principle of gratitude, one of the most powerful principles of the human breast—how much more is there to waken this into exercise in the character of the Christian's God than of the God of the infidel! How much more has the former done than the latter, how much more is he doing every hour, especially as the God of redemption, for the benefit of man! Confidence too—another powerful principle of action—there is much more in the Christian's God to awaken this; for not only does he confer greater present benefits than the other, but he has condescended to make the most glorious promises, and write them down, and even seal them with blood, and moreover fulfils them in the Christian's every-day experience. And even the principle of fear, the Christian's God appeals to with more success than the God of the infidel; for the awful attributes of his character come forth with more distinctness, and his threatenings are a matter of fearful and certain record, and even while he sits upon the throne of his mercy, He proclaims to every sinner that he is in danger of everlasting burnings. And the same is true of all the other active principles of man's nature: a belief in the God of the Bible is incalculably more sovereign in its influence over them than a belief in the God of the infidel.

We arrive then, on two separate grounds, at the conclusion, that a belief in the Christian's God exerts the greatest amount of influence. But we all know that a cause may operate powerfully, and yet not benignly, upon the human character. It is necessary therefore, in order to establish the point we have in view, to show that the same belief exerts not only the greatest amount, but the *noblest kind*, of influence.

And that we may come at the truth on this point in a single word, let me ask you to bear in mind that *from the very constitution of our nature, our characters become assimilated to the object of our supreme homage.* The only question then is, if indeed it be a question, whether the infidel's God or the Christian's God is the more excellent and glorious? If you doubt, then say whether you regard that Being the more glorious who has no certain character, or the Being whose character is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Whether is it more glorious to take a sort of general supervision of the works of his hands, leaving much to the caprice of accident, or to behold every

thing with an eye of watchful regard, and to direct every thing by the dictates of infinite wisdom? Or is it more glorious to exist merely in the abstract perfections of his nature, or to exhibit his attributes in higher though softer majesty in the person of his Son? Or finally, is it more glorious to exist only as the Creator and the Ruler of the world, or also as its Redeemer; to put forth no effort for the salvation of man, or to make a new and loftier development of his character, and to exhibit a union of apparently opposite attributes in the combined grandeur and loveliness of a righteous and forgiving God? The Christian's God then does possess a more exalted character than the God of the infidel: it follows therefore, from the law of our nature to which we just adverted, that a belief in the former exerts the nobler influence.

Our first inquiry then is answered. If a belief in the God of the Christian exerts at once the greatest amount of influence, and the noblest kind of influence, we come fairly to the conclusion that it is best fitted to exalt the human character.

But I cannot dismiss this point without making an appeal to *facts*. Consult then the records of infidelity and the records of Christianity, or bring your own observation to testify on this subject, and tell me where you find the most of true moral dignity and excellence. I do not say that you cannot point me to a character which has been formed under the influence of a belief in the infidel's God, that is not entirely shorn of the naturally amiable qualities that belong to human nature; but I challenge you to point me to one, which, in the sober estimate of even the infidel's conscience, exhibits a high degree of moral virtue. You may now and then find a man of this description, who is inoffensive in his intercourse with his fellow-men, and whose character is not stained with open vice; but never will you find one of lofty virtuous aspirations; never one whose actions are conformed to a high standard of moral excellence; and in the great majority of instances (I dare say it with all the records of infidelity spread out before me) you will find the infidel a selfish, grovelling, not to say a malignant being. He, on the other hand, who sincerely trusts and devoutly worships the Christian's God, exhibits a character which bears the genuine impress of moral worth. Not only the external actions, but the thoughts, the purposes, the feelings, the whole man rises up continually towards the perfection of virtue. Where will you find characters formed by faith in the infidel's God like those of Howard, and Wilberforce, and Thornton, and Edwards, and a multitude of others, whose names illumine the record of Christianity? Bring by the side of these the names of Paine, and Bolingbroke, and Rousseau, and the whole catalogue of their associates, and the infidel himself, if he has not bid adieu to shame as well as to virtue, must blush at the comparison.

2. Our second inquiry is, whether the God of the infidel or of the Christian is best adapted *to meet man's necessities?*

Man needs a *guide*. His lot is cast in a world in which a variety of paths sometimes open before him, and he is at loss which of them either his duty or his safety requires that he should take. Some of these paths are thickly beset with snares, and he cannot enter them but at an incalculable hazard. There are opposite influences to which he is liable to yield, some of which may subserve his advantage, others conduce to his injury, and he is in danger of mistaking the one for the other. Hence he needs a faithful and infallible guide, whom he may consult with confidence in every variety of con-

dition. Such a guide he cannot find in his fellow-man; for he is as weak and ignorant, and liable to mistake as himself. It can be no other than the Infinite God; and let me say, it is the Christian's God, and not the God of the infidel. For what encouragement is there to apply for direction to the latter? Where has he made a promise that he will hear the prayers which are directed to him for guidance and aid; and is there any thing in the character which is attributed to him, especially as concerning himself little with human affairs, to warrant the belief that he *will* listen to the supplications of mortals? And let me ask whether the infidel himself does not feel this? Else how is it to be accounted for that infidels so rarely, if ever, pray; nay, that so many of them actually ridicule prayer as unnecessary and even absurd?

But the Christian's God is as far removed from the God of the infidel, in this respect, as the east is from the west. Not only is there every thing in his character to encourage the hope that he will hear the prayers which are offered him in sincerity and faith, but there is a direct promise;—a promise that he will grant his Spirit to guide his people into all truth, to preserve them from all error, to conduct them through difficulties, to resolve their doubts, and to give them confidence in the discharge of duty. This promise the Christian's God constantly fulfils, as every one who obeys and confides in him can testify. As you would not then abandon yourself to walk in perpetual darkness; as you would have a guide whom you may always consult without the possibility of being deceived, I would say, let this God be your God for ever and ever.

But man needs a *protector* as well as a guide; for he is not only in a world of darkness but of danger. Innumerable evils encompass him about, and there is not an hour or a moment but that he is walking amid perils, and for aught he can tell, may be walking on the borders of destruction. In these circumstances, he surely needs the guardianship of some superior Power. Will the infidel's God afford him the protection which he needs? But he is little more than an indifferent spectator of human affairs; and who has told you that he will concern himself with your condition at all? Does the infidel himself trust him? In seasons of calamity, when the world shows its dark side, and the heart is overburdened with sorrow; above all, in the final wreck of his nature, when the spirit pants for protection such as the world cannot give, does he ever call upon *his* God for relief; and does his God ever appear for him, granting the relief and consolation which he needs? I can point you to many an instance in which the infidel, at such an hour, has turned away from the being to whom he has professedly given his homage, and made an agonizing effort to approach the Christian's God, but I ask you to point me to one in which he has even seemed to trust the infidel's God; much more to one in which he has trusted and found a refuge. The truth is, that at such a season, reason and conscience get the ascendency even in the infidel; and he is compelled to feel that to supplicate the being whom he is accustomed to call God for aid in these circumstances, were a mockery of his own wo. It were alike vain and absurd to fall upon his knees, and ask the special protection and favour of a Being, to whom he does not allow the exercise of a particular providence.

In the Christian's God, there is every thing to encourage confidence in him as a Protector. For his watchful care is universal and uninterrupted. His eye is everywhere, and his arm is irresistible. And while his providence is

in the highest degree particular, he has *promised* his special protection to those who put their trust in him. And the record of the fulfilment of this promise is written in the experience of all his people. The Christian has called upon God for deliverance in the day of his trouble, and he has been delivered. In the day of sickness, in the day of bereavement, in the day of death, trusting in the Lord, he has been enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable. And where the Christian is not shielded from the arrows of adversity, even where he is not delivered from the hand of the destroyer, he enjoys the favour of his God still; for adversity is made to yield a harvest of blessing, and death becomes the gate of immortal glory. Well may he say, while he confides and rejoices in the divine protection, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

But finally, and above all, man needs a *Savior*. Is the God of the infidel or the God of the Christian best adapted to meet *this* exigency of his condition? There are those, I know, who treat sin, the great moral disease of man's nature, as if it were a mere matter to be laughed at; and of course nothing else can be expected but that they should deny the necessity of any redeeming interposition. But the truth is, that in all this there is little sincerity. The infidel is a man; and he is constituted like other men; and like other men he has a conscience, which sometimes raises a tumult in his breast, by convicting him of guilt and pointing his eye towards a retribution. Every man has evidence, independently of all external testimony,—evidence which he is sometimes compelled to feel—that he is a sinner, and as such is exposed to the divine displeasure; that woes heavy and appalling await him unless his sins are forgiven. Now suppose, that with that sense of sin which every man feels at some time or other, you were to think to draw near to the infidel's God for the remission of your sins, and the cleansing of your soul; and supposing him to be all that reason, by her best efforts, can prove him to be;—I ask you whether you do not perceive at once that your case would be well-nigh desperate? For it cannot be denied that well directed reason attributes to the Supreme Being perfect justice and holiness: of course these attributes require that sin should be punished; and the alternative is, that the infidel's God must either punish sin or sacrifice his perfection. When it is remembered, at the same time, that he has given no intimation of pardoning mercy, where is the shadow of encouragement to a sinner to seek forgiveness; or the shadow of hope that it can in any way be extended to him? And if the sinner takes counsel of his conscience, he will find that he needs not only to be forgiven, but sanctified; that a divine influence is necessary to give a right direction to the faculties and principles of his nature, and thus render him capable of spiritual enjoyment. Will you go to the infidel's God to seek *this* blessing? But where have you learned that He is a sanctifying God? Reason has not told you so. Conscience has not told you so. Nature has not told you so. Rely on it, you are groping in the dark, and may as well fold your arms and sit down in despair.

Turn now to the God of the Christian, and behold in him the Savior that you need! He reveals himself as the Lord our Righteousness, and the Lord our strength; as the just God and the merciful; as forgiving iniquity, not at the expense of his perfections, but in a manner which renders his perfections more gloriously conspicuous—through the sacrifice of his own Son. And he gives his Spirit too, as the Sanctifier of the people; to subdue their

rebellion, to implant within them a principle of holiness, and to train them up for an eternal residence in the heavens. I appeal to the noble army of martyrs, and the spirits of the just made perfect—the redeemed who cast their crowns at the foot of the throne, whether this be not so. And lest this should seem like a blind sally of imagination, I appeal to you, Christians, yet in the midst of your conflict,—to every one of you who worships the Christian's God in sincerity and in truth—whether it be not so. Can you not stand up and testify for your God, that when your conscience was burdened wit guilt, he graciously removed the burden by the application of the blood of his Son; that while sin rankled unsubdued in your bosom, he struck a blow which disarmed it of its power; that in all your conflicts his grace strengthens you; and that you carry in your bosom a pledge that his grace will perfect your sanctification, and confer upon you an unwithering crown?

I cannot conclude without applying this argument in one word to a practical use. Let me ask then, who among you all will dare to trust his interests for time and eternity in the hands of the infidel's God? Dare you trust him as your guide, when there are so many devious paths in which you are in danger of being lost; especially when he has given you no promise of his guidance, and there is nothing in his character which should lead you to expect it? Dare you trust him as a refuge, when you do not know that he even hears the prayers which you send up to him in your trouble; and when you do know that there is not an hour of your life, but that every earthly refuge is liable to fail you? Dare you trust him as a Savior, when he claims no such character? Dare you approach him with your heart burdened with guilt, and plead with him for forgiveness, when he has said nothing and done nothing to inspire the least hope of pardon, and when, for aught that you can see, pardon must involve the wreck of his attributes? Dare you ask him to sanctify you, or grant you grace to help in time of need, when, as a sinner, you have forfeited every favor, and have become obnoxious to his wrath? Dare you trust him in the hour of your extremity? Dare you lift up your eyes to him on the bed of death, and ask him to save you: amid the shudderings of guilt, amid the convulsions of pain, amid the uncertainty, the darkness, perhaps the wailings, of that last hour, dare you, I ask, take the God of the infidel for your portion, and throw that deathless spirit of yours on his protection for eternity? Above all, dare you do this, when thousands who have done it before you have testified in the dark valley that they were without a refuge, and have died reproaching themselves for their wretched infatuation?

I know that there is not one of you but would shudder to answer these fearful interrogatories in the affirmative; not one who dares to sit down and deliberately count the cost, and then commit his interests for time and eternity into the hands of the infidel's God. And if you dare not do it deliberately, and with your eyes open, be not so infatuated as to leap inconsiderately into these territories of doubt, and horror, and death. Turn your eye then towards the God of the Christian, and you will find a Being infinitely venerable, altogether lovely; a Being, the devout contemplation of whose character will exalt you from glory to glory; whom you may confidently trust as a guide, a protector, and a Savior; who will sustain you by the right arm of his power and grace while the current of life is ebbing away; and who will keep your immortal spirit safe and happy amid the shocks of the last day.

But remember, that in order that the Christian's God may become your portion, you must yield your hearts and lives to his service. It is not enough that you profess your faith in him, or even that you have some emotions of sublimity or rapture in meditating on his attributes. You must love him, trust him, obey him. Then, I repeat, you may be fearless in adversity; fearless in death; fearless amid the funereal fires of the world.

SERMON CXXXV.

By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D.D.

ALBANY, N. Y.

CHOOSING THE GOOD PART.

Luke x. 42.—*And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

Our blessed Lord, when he was on earth, partook largely of all the common sufferings of human nature. Though he was Lord of the creation, and could always have supplied his own necessities and those of his disciples by miraculous agency, yet, instead of availing himself of his divine power, he suffered many of his wants to go unsupplied, and for the supply of others he cast himself on the hospitality of his friends. There was a family at Bethany who were peculiarly endeared to him; who, in one case, at least, and probably in many others, experienced largely of his kindness, and with whom he seems always to have been a most welcome guest. Passing through their village on his way to Jerusalem, he called to see them; not in the spirit in which it is common to call upon people in these days, as a mere matter of ceremony, but from feelings of genuine affection, and with an earnest desire to do them good. The two sisters, Mary and Martha, seem both to have given him a most cordial welcome: though they exhibited their attachment and joy in very different ways: the one by endeavoring to provide for him an entertainment; the other by sitting at his feet, and listening to his instruction. Martha, observing the course which her sister was taking, in a moment of impatience, complained to the Master that she was left to serve alone, and begged of him the favor that he would bid Mary come to her assistance. But behold, Martha, who no doubt expected commendation, was met with rebuke! "Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Is there not reason to believe that if our Lord were now on the earth, he might often find occasion to offer a similar rebuke? And to be plainer still, is there not reason to believe that many a woman, and many a good woman too, loses much of the benefit to be derived from intelligent and pious visiters,

from the fact that, like Martha, she is cumbered about much serving; that she thinks more of providing a sumptuous entertainment than of having her soul refreshed by edifying and profitable conversation.

The commendation which our Lord bestowed upon Mary is contained in the words of our text:—"And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Let us analyze this passage a little, and see what instruction we can gather from it.

I. The first thought which this passage obviously suggests is, that *religion is a matter of deliberate choice.* "Mary *hath chosen* that good part."

To *choose* is an act of the soul which every one perfectly understands, and which cannot be made more obvious by explanation; insomuch that if you should hear a philosophical lecture on the subject of choice, you would after all come back to your own consciousness to know what it is. We say then that religion is just as much an object of choice as any thing else. If you are hereafter to become religious, it is certain that you will choose to become so. If you remain in your sins, it is equally certain that you will choose to remain in them. There is indeed truth, yea, and glory too, in the doctrine of a divine influence; but that does not interfere at all with your freedom; it leaves you with the full power of choice,—with all the responsibilities of a moral agent.

This is the doctrine of the Bible. "Choose ye this day," says Joshua, "whom ye will serve." It is taken for granted in all the promises and threatenings of the Bible; in the terms on which salvation is offered; in the whole system of means and motives which the gospel exhibits. It is the doctrine of reason, and on it hangs the doctrine of a retribution. It is the doctrine of experience; for every one that has set his face towards heaven is conscious, and is ready to testify, that he has done it by a voluntary act; and notwithstanding all the cavils of irreligious men, I venture to say that every one who is walking in the way to death, feels, when he allows himself to reflect, that he is perfectly voluntary in the course he is pursuing. We will for a moment illustrate this truth, under two or three particulars.

There is choice connected with the assent which the mind yields to the divine authority of the Scriptures. I do not mean that the mind must not be determined in its judgments by the evidence which is actually before it, or that it is possible for a man to believe in one way when he perceives that the evidence preponderates in another; but then it may be and is a matter of choice with him, whether he will examine the evidence at all; and if so, whether he will examine it impartially, seeking divine guidance, and holding his mind in a state to admit the truth, whatever he may find it to be. One man chooses to investigate this subject with a teachable and humble spirit, and he sees evidence perfectly conclusive that the Bible is an inspired book. Another chooses to investigate it in an opposite spirit, and he decides against its claims to inspiration. The act in either case is perfectly voluntary.

And what is thus true of the evidences is not less so of the doctrines of Christianity. In a certain sense it is true that a man may believe them or not believe them as he pleases; because it is left at his pleasure whether to examine them or not to examine them, and whether to approach them with the spirit of a caviller, or the spirit of a docile inquirer. Some of you feel

haps know little of the Bible, and have never read it with any attention in the course of your lives, and of course can have no intelligent belief of its doctrines. Now if the reason of this is asked, what other reason can be given than that you choose to let the Bible alone; especially as you live in a land where the Bible is no rare book, and as you do not belong to a sect that prohibits or discourages the use of it? There are others among you who have made the Scriptures your constant study, and who meditate upon them when you lie down and when you rise up, and who have a thorough knowledge of their contents, and a full belief of their doctrines. And here again, what reason is to be given for this other than that you choose it should be so? Will any one of you say that he was conscious of more constraint in sitting down to study his Bible than in going out to attend to his worldly business? Did you ever dream that you had less liberty in the one case than in the other?

Again—there is the same exercise of choice in the soul's acceptance of a Savior. The two objects which present themselves with their claims to our supreme affection are, on the one hand, the Lord Jesus Christ, and with him all the benefits of his redemption, and on the other, this present world, with all that it has to bestow. Now the sinner, so long as he remains unrenewed, chooses the latter. He chooses it so intensely, if I may be allowed the expression, that he rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue. During this period this world seems to him every thing; it occupies the whole field of his vision; but Christ and his salvation—(they may be something good for aught he knows,)—but he does not discern their excellence and glory, and therefore he does not choose them. But under the enlightening influences of the Spirit, his views change; and the world dwindles to nothing, and Christ becomes all in all; and he chooses Christ as his portion now as deliberately as he chose the world before. Let every Christian say whether I have not spoken to his own experience. Not that I would detract aught from the blessed agency of God's Spirit: no Christian will ever forget on earth or in heaven that it was by the grace of God that he became a new creature; but I venture to say that every Christian is conscious of having been as voluntary in the act of giving himself to God as in any other act of his life. And one proof of it among many is, that he condemns himself for not having done this act before.

I might go on to say that there is equally the exercise of choice in all the Christian's growth in grace; in his prayers; in his social intercourse; in his attendance on the means of religion; in his improvement of the dispensations of Providence; in every thing, in short, that enters into his progress in the divine life. But instead of extending my remarks under this article, I pass to

II. A second general observation suggested by the text, viz. that *he who chooses religion chooses a good part.* "Mary hath chosen *that good pa t.*"

Is not this manifest when you consider that he who chooses religion chooses a portion *for his soul?* What is the body? Mere corruptible matter; destined ere long to become disorganized, and to remain so perhaps for ages. And the whole animal nature—what is it? It is that which proclaims to us that we are of the earth, earthly; that which would keep us silent, if a reptile should lift up its head from the dust, and claim to be our brother or *our sister.* Now in making this world your portion, you consult only the

interest of the body; that on which the dignity of your nature least depends. But religion is a portion for the soul, the nobler part; that spirit within a man which can dart from pole to pole, and rise from earth to heaven, and hold communion even with the Almighty Spirit. Turn your eye inward, O man, and commune with yourself. Analyze the operations of that principle, that spirit, that invisible something which you call your soul, and which emphatically constitutes yourself. Observe its amazing powers, capable of an indefinite and, for aught that appears, an eternal expansion. Mark its sublime aspirations; its etherial tendency; its reachings down into the future as well as its excursions through the past. I have said that religion is a portion for the soul. And how? By satisfying all the soul's desires, great and boundless as they are. By furnishing proper exercise for its powers, thus causing them to expand and brighten into angelic powers, and to approximate more and more for ever to the perfections of the Highest. If then the soul be the nobler part of the man, and if religion is a portion for the soul—an adequate portion—a satisfying portion, who will not say that he who chooses religion chooses a good part?

Again—this is the good part, because *it is the right part.* There is an original immutable distinction between right and wrong. Men in the hardihood of their depravity may strive to annihilate that distinction, but conscience nevertheless recognises it, and asserts it, and maintains it, though in doing so, it often makes war upon the passions. I will not agitate the question, as it is a mere question of metaphysics, whether this distinction be founded primarily in the will of God or in the nature of things: I assert nothing here but the reality of its existence: and I say that religion is a good part, because it is the right part, in reference to the grand distinction of which I have spoken. God, as a perfect Being, must love holiness and hate sin; and in accordance with the perfection of his nature, he must and does require holiness and forbid sin; and there is a principle in every man's moral nature which entirely justifies this grand feature of the divine administration. Now he who is truly religious acts in accordance with the will of God, with the moral character and government of God; in short, in accordance with what every moral being in the universe feels to be right, and with what *is* right. I ask again then, in view of *this* consideration, whether he who chooses religion does not choose a good part?

But observe still further, that in making this choice, *all the interests of the soul become identified with the interests of Jehovah himself.*

The views which God entertains of the characters of men are regulated by a regard to this broad and original distinction of which I have already spoken: those who are on the side of righteousness he regards his friends; those of the opposite character, his enemies; and these views determine his conduct towards them. There are qualifications necessary, you know, to introduce men to particular stations and societies on earth; and there is a qualification necessary to introduce a man into God's gracious kingdom; and that qualification is religion; but the moment he is thus introduced, he has all the perfections of Jehovah pledged for his protection, and comfort, and ultimate triumph. His interest becomes Jehovah's interest. All God's gracious promises it becomes his privilege to appropriate; promises which he can lean upon with joyful confidence in the day of adversity, in the day of temp-

tation, in the day of death. Can you doubt whether that be a good part which secures to you everywhere an Almighty protector and friend?

And then again, remember that this is *a portion for eternity.* Do you envy that man whose laurels seem so bright and thick upon his brow, and whose splendid political, or military, or literary achievements have caused his name to ring through the world? Envy him not; for the grave that receives his body will receive his glory too. That is not a portion for eternity. Do you covet the condition of the man who in the pride of his heart counts up his millions, and moves in splendor, and riots in luxury? Believe me, there is nothing there which you need greatly to desire; for all that silver and gold is perishable, and it will be melted down, if not sooner, in the fires of the last day. Do you value the pleasures of friendship? These are indeed valuable; but unless it be a sanctified friendship, the enjoyment which it yields will not reach beyond the grave. But religion—it not only consults the best interests, and the loftiest, noblest desires of the soul, but it does this through eternity. It does much indeed in the present life. It drives away darkness; it delivers from the shudderings of guilt; it alleviates sorrow; it acts as a safe guide in difficulties; it secures to the soul communion with God; and stands by it as a helper in the dark valley, and lifts the curtain and lets in some light from heaven upon the eye that death is rendering blind to the objects of the world. I say religion does much for the soul here; but it is not till the soul lets go its hold upon the world that religion displays its noblest triumph. Oh, it is in heaven, where all is brightness to the eye, and all is melody to the ear, and all is transport to the soul, that religion does her best, her noblest work. And as the soul is immortal, so are the joys of religion immortal. As the soul is capable of an illimitable expansion, so religion is capable of ministering for ever to its increasing joy. Oh, what will not the soul gain from religion in its whole course through everlasting ages. I ask once more, does not he who chooses religion choose the good part?

III. I proceed to a third and last observation from the text, which is, that *he who possesses religion has that which he can never be deprived of.* "Mary hath chosen that good part *which cannot be taken away.*"

This is rendered certain by the promise of God. He has declared concerning his people, that none shall ever pluck them out of his hand; and that they shall be kept by the power of his grace through faith unto salvation. Hear the triumphant language of Paul. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us."—"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, there is the testimony of him who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, to the truth that God's people will be kept to the day of final redemption; in other words, that he who chooses religion for his portion chooses that which cannot be taken from him.

There is another consideration that evinces this, drawn from the nature of religion. We sometimes speak of religion as if it were something without the man; but then we speak of it figuratively: it is really something within *him; or, may* I not even say it is the man himself, renewed after the image of

Christ? An enemy might as well think to deprive a man of his understanding, or his conscience, or any of the faculties of his soul, as of his religion; for religion is nothing else than the impulse, the direction which the soul has received. You may confine a man in a dungeon; you may throw him into chains; you may bring him to the scaffold, or even light the fagots upon his body; but you cannot wrest from h m his religion: that immortal spirit you cannot harm: that principle of divine grace in the heart you cannot reach; and you need not wonder if it should mock your impotent efforts, and even neutralize torture, and make him serene and joyful while the flames or the rack are liberating the spirit for its ascension to glory. Read the records of Christian martyrdom, and you will be convinced that I am not supposing an impossibility.

How unlike in this respect is this good part from any thing that is pursued or valued as a portion by the children of the world! Your riches take to themselves wings and they are gone. Your splendid mansions, with all that they contain, burn down at midnight. Your ships laden with the treasures of other lands go down in the dark ocean. The laurels which decorate your brow fall off, and the high ground of honour on which you had stood sinks from beneath your feet, and perhaps a grave is opened in which is buried even your good name. Health too—Oh how it flies before the withering power of disease; and those roses that bloomed with so much verdure and beauty fade; and the countenance grows pale, and the eye deathlike! And even life —life, on which every other earthly good depends—we hold it by so frail a tenure that it can scarcely stand before the touch of an insect. But not so with this blessed portion of the soul. Come poverty, come sickness, come bereavement, and religion will shine out upon those dark scenes, in all her brightness and all her majesty, just as the setting sun tinges with a hue of glory the evening cloud. Come death, that enemy at which nature shudders, and reason justifies the shuddering; come dressed in thy darkest attire, and armed with thy sharpest arrow, and moving as if there were vengeance in thy footsteps,—and religion will look thee in the face and smile: she will not resist, nor desire to resist thee in thy work; for what thou art doing is necessary to the accomplishment of *her* purposes; but she will protect the spirit whilst thou art exerting thy power upon the body; and then she will open the door of the sepulchre with one hand, and the door of the palace of the King of Glory with the other. Oh, the triumphs, the immortal triumphs of religion!

1. On a review of our subject, we remark, first, that *if sinners perish, the blame must be upon themselves.* Sinners in this world, when they are pressed with the obligations of religion, not unfrequently put their consciences to sleep by cavils respecting their inability, or the decrees of God; but at the judgment, if not before, they will see that all this was a miserable course of trifling, and that the reason why they are on the left-hand is, that they chose a course which they knew would prevent their being on the right; that the reason why they are not admitted to the joys of eternal life is, that life and death being placed before them, they madly chose death. Does the question arise, why all who are before me are not Christians? With the Bible in my hand, I dare give no other answer than that uncomfortable and condemning one, that it is because you do not choose to be Christians; in other words, you do not choose to yield yourselves to the influences of the Holy Spirit, or to make all the sacrifices which are involved in giving the heart to God. That

you would be willing to live a life of sin, and go to heaven when you die, admits of no question; but to deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and engage actively and perseveringly in the service of Christ—this is more than you choose to undertake. Say then, if you perish, where will the blame of your perdition rest, if it do not rest upon yourself? When God says to you, "Thou hast destroyed, or art destroying thyself," what hast thou to answer? What answer will you be prepared to give, when that fearful charge shall ring in your ears, in connexion with the irrevocable sentence that dooms you to everlasting burnings?

2. You may gather some light from this subject, *in respect to the process of becoming a Christian.* It often happens in respect to persons under the awakening influences of God's Spirit, that they are exceedingly perplexed in respect to the course they shall pursue; in respect both to the nature of the desired change, and the means by which it is to be effected. But if what you have heard be correct, this difficulty must be in a great measure removed. What you have to do is to choose God as the portion of your soul; his service as the employment of your life; his will as the rule of your duty; his glory as the end of your actions. Now I admit that you cannot make this choice unless you really see ground for it; but if you do not see it, remember it is your sin, not your apology. Yield yourself then, I pray you, to solemn reflection on your own wretched condition as a sinner; on the character of God; on the law of God; on the reasonableness of the claims which he makes upon you; on the provision which he offers for your salvation; and in all this cast yourself on the influences of his Spirit, beseeching him to work within you both to will and to do. You see then that religion begins in reflection; and reflection, under a divine influence, leads to that decisive act by which Christ is chosen as the soul's everlasting portion.

3. Finally: *Happy they who have secured this good part!* Only let me be assured that a fellow-mortal is interested in Christ's salvation, and in the estimate which I form of his happiness, I will not ask whether he is a king or a beggar; whether he is clothed in rags, or in purple and fine linen; whether the dark cloud of affliction is hanging over him, or he is rejoicing in the effulgence of earthly prosperity. Because, whether his home be a cabin or a palace, whether his path through the world be planted with thorns or strewed with roses, I know on the authority of Eternal Truth, that ere long he will be a king and a priest unto God, will breathe the air, and rejoice in the beams, and join in the melody, and walk about the golden streets of the heavenly paradise. I know that there will be a crown upon his head, and that his heart will be full of ecstasy, while he casts that crown at his Redeemer's feet, and bows and sings and shouts with holy reverence and seraphic fire. Art thou afflicted then, Christian? Bear it without a word. Art thou poor? No, thou art heir to all the treasures of heaven. Does thy conflict seem sharp and bitter? God thy Redeemer is coming to terminate it quickly, and cause that spirit now struggling with corruption to rise, and soar, and range upon the plains of immortality. Oh is it any wonder that the dying Christian, with heaven in his eye and heaven in his soul, longs to depart? Is it any wonder that it is so often the last office of the faltering tongue to exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

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SERMON CXXXVI.

BY NATHAN PERKINS, D. D.,

WEST-HARTFORD, CONN.

Preached on the Sixtieth Anniversary of his ministry at that place.

THE DOCTRINES ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

2 Peter, i. 12, 13, 14, 15.—*Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able, after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*

This day is peculiarly interesting, as it completes the sixtieth year of my ministerial labors in this place. Ten years ago I preached my half-century sermon, which was published at your request, and is probably in most of your houses. I now feel it proper to add some things, suggested by my advanced age, and the return of this anniversary. I am now the oldest officiating minister of the gospel in this state, or, as far as I can learn, in the United States. And I cannot learn, from the history of churches in Connecticut, that there has ever before been an instance of one of its ministers preaching for sixty years uninterruptedly to the same congregation; nor, during a life of eighty-three years, have I ever met with one who had preached the gospel of the grace of God to one and the same people for so long a period. This, therefore, is a singular instance; and the words selected for my text may be regarded as peculiarly appropriate to the occasion. In them, the apostle Peter informs those whom he addresses, that he was now advanced in age, but that he judged it to be his duty, as long as he continued in the world, to put them in remembrance of the great and essential doctrines of the Christian religion, which he calls "the present truth," as they were then, and always, equally important and necessary. He tells them that he expected

soon to go the way of all the earth; and that he was anxious that after his decease they might rightly understand and invariably cleave to these essential principles, and never forget or depart from them. Placed in like circumstances, and affectionately desirous of your welfare, I propose in the present discourse,

Concisely to state and explain the essential doctrines of the gospel, and to commend them to your permanent and habitual remembrance.

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." The apostle Peter felt towards the essential doctrines of grace as all the truly pious do. He wished those to whom he wrote rightly to understand them, and to receive them in their hearts. He resolved that as long as he should be permitted to live, he would not cease—would not fail to state and explain and urge them on the conscience. And had these doctrines been always plainly urged, clearly taught, and solemnly presented to mankind, by the successors of St. Peter, the world would have been comparatively free from gross error and religious contention, and the gospel gloriously triumphant. No preaching can be useful, or acceptable to that God "who will have all men come to the knowledge of the truth," which does not keep these essential doctrines in habitual remembrance. For a minister to neglect them for the indulgence of a fervid imagination, or the pride of learning and philosophy, is to treat with absolute contempt the message with which he is charged. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee," saith the Lord. These first principles of the oracles of God, Paul denominates "sound doctrine," and "the truth as it is in Jesus." The apostle Peter calls them "the present truth," and "the sincere milk of the word;" and the apostle Jude, "the faith once delivered to the saints." Our Lord himself calls them "the truth." Nor shall we be likely to mistake the mind of God, if we have that reverence for his authority which leads us directly, habitually, and prayerfully to his Word, and that love to souls which makes us willing and desirous to urge upon the conscience the known and established truths of God, rather than any original "inventions" or theories of our own. The apostles were not ambitious of novelties: they were not ashamed of the simple gospel with which they were charged—were not ashamed or negligent to put men in remembrance of its principles, though they already knew them, and were "established in the truth."

With such examples before me, I now proceed to state and explain what are the essential truths of the gospel, though they have been exhibited to you a thousand times; for I never preached a sermon to you in which they were not either expressed or implied. "And while I am in this tabernacle, I think it meet to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance of them."

The first which I shall notice, is *the fulness and sufficiency of the Scriptures, both as a rule of life and standard of faith.* If a merciful and gracious God should condescend to give us a revelation of his mind respecting our salvation, we might safely conclude, from his wisdom and benevolence, that he would give us a full and sufficient one; for a defective one would not answer for man, or be promotive of his own glory. We have, in the holy Scriptures, a perfect and infallible guide in the path of duty, and in the path to glory. Abraham is introduced by our Savior, in a beautiful par-

able, as arguing with the rich man, who was lifting up his eyes in torment, in the following manner, in respect to his brethren on earth—"They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one went from the dead." Our Savior says, "Blessed are they that hear the word of the Lord and keep it." The word of God, then, must be a perfect and infallible directory in the way to eternal life. It contains every doctrine we are to believe, every duty we are to perform, and every ordinance upon which we are to attend. Its very purpose is to build us up in holiness to a blessed immortality. Reason and conscience, or the light of nature, can teach us something of God and of duty, but cannot teach us the essential things of salvation. Natural religion, as far as it goes, is to be obeyed; but it is altogether defective in making known to us the most essential things concerning our salvation. For instance, the light of nature cannot teach us many of the attributes of God, or how he will be worshipped, or whether sin can be forgiven, or whether the soul be immortal, or whether there be a future world, or a Savior, or a day of judgment, or an everlasting heaven, or an eternal hell. But the Bible is explicit on all these points. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Another essential doctrine of the gospel respects *the being, attributes, and glory of God, together with the mode of his existence, purity of his laws, and wisdom of his government.* All creation proclaims, in a language which none need misunderstand, his being, and many of his attributes. He is the one, living, and true God, in opposition to all idols, which can neither see, nor hear, nor move, nor help. His own word, however, only reveals to us fully his true character, attributes, and glory. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all; the creator, preserver, and benefactor of all worlds. He is also the legislator, disposer, and judge of the universe; possessed of all possible perfections; worthy to be loved, to be feared, to be adored, to be admired, and chosen as a portion by all rational creatures. He may justly and equitably claim from us, on account of the infinite excellence of his nature, all possible expressions of obedience, the warmest affections of our hearts, the highest services of our lives, the sincerest praises of our tongues. Moreover, his Word states to us the peculiar mode of his existence, as ONE God, in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and we never think rightly of him, unless we take into view this his peculiar mode of existence, and contemplate him as the triune God. And as God himself is infinitely glorious, so his law is infinitely just, and his government is infinitely wise and holy.

Another fundamental principle of the Christian religion is the *divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ.* Christ must be divine in order to be qualified

to expiate the guilt of sin. He did every thing necessary to be done, and suffered every thing necessary to be suffered, in order to a full and perfect atonement, to honor God, to magnify the law, to sustain the government and authority of God, and to open an honorable door of salvation for the penitent, believing sinner. His blood cleanses from all sin, and his righteousness is perfect. Revelation tells us who Christ was, and what he did and suffered to save lost and perishing man. It tells us that he was truly God, as well as really man: and that his two natures, divine and human, constituted one mysterious person, in order that he might be a fit mediator between God and man. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." That he was truly God is proved from the following heads of argument:—The names proper and peculiar to God are given to him: the works proper and peculiar to God are said to be done by him: the attributes or perfections proper and peculiar to God only are ascribed to him: the worship peculiar and due to God only is given to him: and he is to judge the world. We conclude, therefore, if language has meaning, that he is truly and properly God, equally with the Father.

The *personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost* is also a fundamental principle of the Christian religion. That he is a person, and not an attribute of God, is plain from Scripture. Personal pronouns are applied to him: personal properties are ascribed to him: and personal actions described as being done by him. We have no better means of ascertaining, in any case, distinct personality. Those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity hold that the Holy Ghost, so often spoken of in Scripture, means only an attribute, and particularly the power of God. But, among others, two very plain declarations of the personality of the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Son, may be mentioned:—one, the apostolic benediction, "The grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost*, be with you all;" the other the form of Christian baptism, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" That the Holy Ghost is truly and properly God, as well as a distinct person in the Godhead, is most evident from the following arguments:—Attributes proper to God only are ascribed to him: names proper to God only are given to him: works proper to God only are said to be done by him: and worship due to God only is paid to him. I should not here have been so particular, had it not been a point of so much moment, in the Scripture scheme of salvation. A denial of the doctrine of the Trinity is a denial of what is most essential in the gospel. If there be no Holy Ghost, and no atonement by Jesus Christ, nothing of Christianity is left us, but mere morality. Renouncing these doctrines is resigning to the infidel all that is discriminating in the gospel.

The *Covenant of Redemption* is of high importance in the gospel of salvation. Foreseeing the apostacy of man, in infinite mercy, the Supreme Being provided a remedy. The covenant of redemption was formed between the persons of the adorable Trinity. God the Father, in this covenant, promises to give the Son a seed to serve him; God the Son undertakes to redeem and save lost man; and God the Holy Ghost covenants to apply the redemp-

tion provided: each person in the adorable Trinity has a part to perform in man's salvation. Hence we read, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And Christ says, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." And the Holy Spirit is given to call, enlighten, and sanctify: his regenerating influence is thus spoken of, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Another important doctrine of the oracles of God respects *the original state of man*. The first progenitors of the human race were created in holiness, and placed in an earthly paradise, in the garden of Eden. They were made holy in the image, and happy in the favor of their Maker. They were placed under the divine law, as a rule of life, and covenant of works. They were forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, on pain of death. They were put in a state of probation. Alas! how is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! Our first parents did partake of the interdicted fruit, and thus lost the image and favor of God. The terms of this covenant of works were—obey, and live; disobey, and die. Obey, and be happy; disobey and be miserable. They did disobey; and their apostacy brought mankind into a state of sin and misery. "By one man, sin entered into the world." "By the offence of ONE, (Adam and Eve being considered as ONE,) judgment came upon all men unto condemnation:"—"by the disobedience of one many were made sinners:"—"as in Adam all die."

The *present fallen state of man* is among the essential doctrines of revealed religion. All are involved in the ruins of the apostacy. All come into the world entirely depraved, in a moral and not a physical sense. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." "The wicked are estranged from the womb." "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." "And were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others." "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."

A further essential principle of the gospel respects the nature and necessity of *regeneration by the Holy Ghost*. Regeneration, or the spiritual birth, lies at the foundation of all vital piety, and gospel holiness, and new obedience. Its nature consists in an entire change of heart, from sin to holiness, or from enmity against God to supreme love to him. Its nature does not consist in a mere reformation of morals—in doctrinal light—in baptismal washing—or excitement of the natural affections. No new faculty of soul is given in regeneration. The person, who is the happy subject of it, has the same rational powers and capacities of soul after, as before it; the same understanding, the same conscience, the same memory, the same judgment, the same will (considered as an essential power or faculty of the soul), the same animal affections. The change is a *moral* change. "A new heart," or disposition, is given. The change is instantaneous. No time is taken up in passing from death unto life. The "new heart" is given, not by man, but by the Holy Ghost. Truth, however plainly or scripturally presented, does not of itself regenerate the soul. Doctrinal light does not regenerate the soul. The sinner does not regenerate himself. "Which were born not of

blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In view of this passage of Scripture, one would think it impossible that any should conceive the sinner to regenerate himself, or that doctrinal light, or the strivings and prayers of others, should regenerate the sinner.

Another of the first principles of the oracles of God respects the *moral agency of man, his accountability to his Maker, and the immortality of the soul.* The Holy Spirit does not, in any of his operations, either in regeneration or progressive sanctification, break in upon the laws of moral agency. Moral agency consists in acting according to our choice and disposition, by motives. Man is a moral agent when he acts freely in the view of motives. A moral agent cannot be responsible for not putting forth exertions which are beyond the powers and capacities with which the author of his nature endowed him. Man has the natural powers and capacities requisite to perform all the duties required of him in both the first and second tables of the law; all that is wanting is a disposition of heart to comply. God treats him as a moral agent, and demands no more of him, than he has given him capacities to perform, were he rightly disposed towards God. Man is bound, by the laws of his rational existence, to love, adore, worship, fear, and serve his Maker; and nothing hinders him but wickedness of heart, or his "enmity against God." All who hear the gospel are bound by all possible obligations immediately to repent of all sin—to submit to God—to believe on his only-begotten Son—to lead a holy life—to be perfectly conformed to the divine will, and to do the whole of their duty, and nothing prevents but stubborn and wilful obstinacy of heart. We are accountable, as well as moral agents. And are to exist for ever. The soul is immortal. But he that made us, could alone tell us, whether we are to exist for ever or not.

That God's *purposes reach to all events, in the natural and moral world,* is another essential doctrine of the gospel. And all that ever will be saved are chosen from eternity to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth—are *chosen that they may be holy.* All that is included in the doctrine of divine eternal purposes, so much misapprehended, is, that God, infinitely wise and good, laid out his plan of government, over both the natural and moral world, and determined to do all things exactly right in all worlds, and works all things after the counsel of his own will. And the doctrine of election, which results from God's eternal purposes, so often misrepresented, is all included in these words of the apostle Paul to the Thessalonian converts, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." In the divine decrees and election, the means and the end always go together. But the venom of the natural heart is often strikingly displayed against these doctrines. And one peculiar mark of a sound conversion is a willingness that God should reign—that he should do as he pleases in all his universe.

The *pardon of sin,* and *justification of the repenting, believing sinner,* and *adoption into the family of God,* are among the important and essential principles of Christianity. These three doctrines I mention together, because intimately connected: for where there is the one, there also will be the other. Gospel pardon is only through the atoning blood of the Son of God,

and consists in an acquittal from condemnation. Gospel *justification* is the act of God, and is passed only through the righteousness of Christ received by faith. It is something more than pardon. It comprises the pardon of sin, reception into the favor of God, and a title to eternal life. *Adoption* is God's receiving us into his family, and numbering us with his children.

Further, it may be added, *supreme love to God*, a reverential *fear of him*, deep *repentance for all our sins*, *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and *new obedience*, are essential principles of the gospel scheme of salvation. Religion is a practical system; and everywhere requires holiness of heart and life. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," saith the Lord. The tree must be made good, and then the fruit will be good. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Why call ye me, says Christ, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Finally—Among the fundamental principles of the oracles of God may be enumerated the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, a heaven of glory for the righteous, and a hell of misery for the wicked, the institution of the Christian Sabbath, and a preached gospel, the duties of public and private devotion, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the means of grace generally.

The fundamental truths of revelation thus briefly sketched are all calculated to honor a God of infinite goodness, and to abase the pride of man; they consider and treat man as being what he is, a free moral agent. All departures from these doctrines are departures from the truth as it is in Jesus. I have made it the great object of my ministry to preach them, and to press them as a personal, practical concern on the conscience and on the heart. I now affectionately put you in remembrance of them, and fervently pray, "that you may be able after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance."

While these great truths of revelation have been habitually inculcated, and pressed upon your consideration, the influences of the Holy Ghost have been shed down upon you, as a church and society, in copious effusions. In this respect perhaps no church and people have had greater occasion for devout gratitude to God. We have been favored by him, as the great fountain of grace and mercy, with eight precious revivals of religion. In these revivals about five hundred have been made the trophies of sovereign and victorious grace; and in proper time, after enjoying a fit season to test the soundness of their hopes, have been admitted to the communion of the church. Besides these, about two hundred others, in the ordinary times of the gospel, have been received to the communion. Verily, our God is faithful to his promises. He has signally honored his truth in the midst of us. And in review, it becomes us to repeat with deep humility and fervent gratitude, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." And now what more can I say to this people? "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." *Amen*, and AMEN.

SERMON CXXXVII.

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CONVICTION OF SIN BY THE LAW.

ROM. iii. 20.— . . . . *By the law is the knowledge of sin.*

No branch of knowledge can be more important to us than a knowledge of ourselves; and no part of self-knowledge is so important, and at the same time so difficult, as a knowledge of our sins. This kind of knowledge is difficult, because it is humiliating, mortifying, alarming, painful, and men turn away from it with aversion and dread. There are but a few, comparatively, who dare to look their sins in the face—who have courage to search them out, and trace them in their inevitable and interminable consequences. But this knowledge, of which so many are afraid, and to which they are so much averse, allow me to say, is of the *utmost importance.* A degree of it is as important, indeed, as is the conversion and salvation of the soul.

It is a common sentiment, that, in order to be converted, men must be first *convicted;* or that conviction, in the order of nature, precedes the turning of the heart to God. But what is conviction, but a full knowledge of our sins? The convicted person sees that he is a great sinner, a guilty lost creature, and justly exposed to be cast off for ever.

It is a common sentiment, that, in order to receive forgiveness and salvation, we must *repent* of our sins. But whoever repented of his sins before he came to a knowledge of them? We must first see ourselves to be vile, odious, ungrateful creatures, who have broken the best of laws, and unreasonably offended the best of beings; and under impressions such as these, the tear of penitence is made to flow.

It is a common sentiment, that, in order to be saved, we must be willing to accept of *mercy,* and even to beg for it. We must be willing to pray as the publican did, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But mercy and justice are very different things, and we shall never be willing to ask for the one, until we have ceased to depend on the other. Would you go to your neighbor, and ask him to relieve your necessities by giving you a small sum of money, while you held in your hand a just demand against him, the payment of which you might at any time enforce? No more will the sinner go to God and beg for mercy, until he sees—in the number and aggravation of his offences—that if justice takes its course with him, he is undone for ever.

It is the universal belief of Christians, that, in order to be saved by Christ, the sinner must be willing to come to him and embrace him as his Savior. But no person ever yet came to Christ, or was willing to come, until he felt that he needed him, and was undone without him; and no person ever felt this, or could feel it, until he saw himself to be a great sinner. "The whole

need not a physician, but they that are sick;" and while we fancy ourselves comparatively whole, in a hopeful state, in a good moral condition, we never shall apply to the great Physician of the soul for help.

These remarks are intended to show, that a knowledge of our sins (to a certain extent at least) is *indispensable* to our conversion and salvation; because without it, we shall never repent, never believe, and never seek or find that mercy which is promised in the gospel.

And it is important, not only for the unrenewed sinner to come to a knowledge and sense of his sins, but for *the Christian* also, who has been renewed, to cherish and retain a sense of his. He must not satisfy himself with reflecting that he has been once convicted, and once felt the burthen of his sins; he must feel this burthen daily, and the more deeply the better: for it is a truth, my brethren, and one worthy to be remembered, that *according as we cherish daily a sense of personal unworthiness and guilt, just in that proportion will every Christian grace rise and flourish in the soul.*

Who is that Christian, whose *love to God* will be the most ardent and constant? He, our Savior teaches us, to whom most has been forgiven. In other words, he who has the deepest sense of sin, and still hopes that his sins are forgiven—he will "*love most.*" And who is the most *humble* Christian? Who lies lowest at the feet of the Savior? And from whose eye does the tear of penitence most easily flow? From his, undoubtedly, who has the greatest sense of sin—who feels most deeply that he is a vile, unworthy creature, whose only dependence and hope are in the mercy of his Savior. And who is that believer whose *faith* is strongest—who clings most closely to Christ, and to whom his name is the most endearing and precious? He, undoubtedly, who is most sensible of his need of Christ—who feels most deeply that he is lost and undone without him. To such a one the Savior will indeed be precious. He will throw around him the arms of his faith, and nothing can separate him from his love. And who is that Christian who will feel most deeply, and pray most fervently, and labor most cheerfully and successfully for the salvation of others? He who has seen most of the plague and depravity of his own heart; who has been led to regard himself as guilty and undone, and to tremble in prospect of the coming wrath. With such views in relation to his own case, he looks abroad on the world around him, and sees it filled with creatures apostate and perishing, as he once was, but slumbering over the abyss of ruin, and taking no measures to effect their escape; and he *feels* for them,—he *prays* for them. Can he help it? He *knows* their situation, though they do not; and his "spirits yearn o'er dying men." He is ready to do any thing, and to make any sacrifice, for their conversion and salvation.

Here, undoubtedly, was the secret of Paul's great engagedness and his untiring exertions. Paul learned, in his own heart, the hearts of others. He saw, in his own exposedness to ruin, the fearful exposure to which the world around him was subjected. With his eyes open upon this affecting subject, he felt his "spirit stirred within him;" and he hasted from city to city, and from land to land, proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God, that he "might by any means *save some.*"

In illustration of the remarks here made, on the connexion between a deep and abiding sense of sin, and a lively exercise of grace in the heart of the Christian, it will occur to you, that the most eminent saints, in all periods of

the church, have had the most humbling, abasing views of their own characters. Look at Job: "Behold *I am vile;* what shall I answer thee? I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" Look at David: "*I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight.*" Look at Isaiah: "*Wo is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips,* and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Look also at Paul, that great exemplar of Christian attainment and experience: "I find," says he, "a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!*" "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom *I am chief.*" And from the days of Paul down to the present, the facts on this subject have been the same. Read the humbling confessions of Augustine, and you will see, in the abasing views which he entertained of himself, the living spring of his eminent piety. Read Bunyan's account of himself, appropriately entitled "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners;" and you will see how this holy man rose to that eminence in knowledge and grace, which fitted him to write his "Pilgrim's Progress." Read the lives of such men as Brainerd, and Cowper, and John Newton, and Fuller, and Henry Martyn, and Samuel J. Mills; and you will find that they were not more distinguished for their piety, and zeal, and usefulness in the church, than they were for their deep, and often painful, and ever-abiding convictions of sin.

The immortal Edwards, whose spiritual attainments, probably, have not been exceeded upon earth, since the days of the apostle Paul, thus expresses the views which he entertained of himself years after his conversion: "My wickedness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination, like an infinite deluge, or mountains over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite." If this seems to any of you to be extravagant language, you will remember that it was used by one who, so far as the eyes of men could follow him, was a *pattern* of all the graces and virtues of the gospel. President Edwards was led to use this language respecting himself, not because he was more wicked than other men, but because he had seen farther into his depraved and deceitful heart than most other men; and the result of his deep humiliation was a proportionate *exaltation*, in every thing pertaining to the Christian character and life.

And if we look, my brethren, into our own churches, and investigate the religious history of those members who are the most uniformly devoted and engaged, those whose piety is *perennial*, we shall find, perhaps in every instance, that they are the persons who have had, and still have, the deepest sense of their own unworthiness and sinfulness. And this is precisely what we might expect to find. For, with these convictions of unworthiness and sinfulness, the Christian must be humble; he must be penitent; he must feel his need of Christ, and will cling to him; he will see that he has much to be forgiven, and will love much; he will see the odious nature of sin, and will watch and pray, and strive against it; and seeing the dangers to which

others around him are exposed, he will be willing to labor earnestly and perseveringly for their conversion and salvation. It is in this way that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted,—and that deep convictions of sin, after the heart is sanctified, are sure to result in eminent, distinguished piety and usefulness.

The preceding remarks are designed to show, first, to the unconverted sinner, and, secondly, to the believer, the great importance of coming to a thorough knowledge of their characters, and especially of their sins. To the sinner, a degree of this knowledge is as important as is the salvation of his soul; and to the believer, high and increasing degrees of it are *indispensable* to his growth in grace, and his spiritual improvement.

How, then, shall this knowledge be obtained? A most interesting question this, and one to which the language of the text is a direct and complete answer:—"BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN."

We are bound to believe this declaration of the apostle, not only because, like all other Scripture, it was given by inspiration of God, but because it was the language of his own experience. Paul could remember the time when, in his own estimation, he was morally whole and alive—when he was a boastful, self-righteous Pharisee. He thought himself as good as anybody, and better than most persons. His "hopes of heaven were firm and bright;" for he thought himself so nearly perfect, and God so merciful, that he was sure he had nothing to fear.

The reason of this delusion Paul has himself explained. He was "*without the law.*" Not that he had no knowledge of the law of God, or did not consider himself as bound to obey it. He must have been well acquainted with the ten commandments, could probably repeat them as familiarly as the alphabet, and, like the other Pharisees, might have worn parts of them on his forehead, and wrists, and on the borders of his garments.* But he was without any proper spiritual understanding of the Divine law. He had never seen it in its great extent, strictness, and purity, and consequently had no idea of the number, magnitude, and turpitude of his transgressions of it. He was, in *this sense*, "alive without the law."

But Paul could also remember a season—the most interesting one in his whole moral existence—in which his views of himself were suddenly and totally changed. A sense of sin revived within him, and he found himself morally, spiritually dead. His good opinion of himself in a moment vanished; he awoke as from a delusive dream; his eyes were opened; and he saw himself to be in a state of complete moral death and ruin. The occasion of this surprising change, Paul has also himself explained. "*The commandment came.*" When the commandment came home with light and power to his slumbering conscience; when the law of God was apprehended in its great extent, strictness, and purity; he saw at once how it was with him—he could be deceived no longer—he waked up to the dreadful reality of his condition—and the self-righteous Pharisee becomes, of a sudden, a mourning, weeping, trembling, and almost despairing penitent. Having experienced the effects of the law upon his own heart, in bringing him to a sense of his true character and condition, Paul was now prepared to guide and instruct others. He was able to tell awakened sinners how they might become convicted. He

* See Matt. xxiii. 5.

could say with an emphasis to inquirers of this sort, "*By the law is the knowledge of sin.*"

This declaration of the apostle is true to the letter. What is sin? "Sin," we are told, "is a transgression of the law." Consequently, if there was no law, there could be no transgression; and if we had no knowledge of any law, we could never know how much we had transgressed it, or whether we had transgressed at all. And it is also true, that *the judgment which persons form respecting their own characters will always correspond to the ideas which they entertain of the law of God.*

Here is one man, who thinks that the sum of what God requires of him is to be just and honest in his intercourse with others; to discharge his outward, relative duties; to be a good neighbor, citizen, and friend; and so to conform to what may be called the decencies of social life, that those with whom he is connected may have no occasion to reproach him. Such are his ideas of the law of God; such his rule of life; and he endeavors to live up to it. And in a good degree, perhaps, he does. He *is* just in his intercourse with others; he does discharge his outward, relative duties; he is a good neighbor, citizen, and friend; and he so conforms to the decencies of life, that those associated with him have no great reason to find fault. He may not do all this constantly; he may come short in particular instances; but his failures are rather occasional than habitual, and not of a nature to give him trouble or alarm. Now, it is not possible for this man to be convicted, or to come to a knowledge of his sins, till he first learns that he has totally mistaken the law of God. With his present views of the law, how can he think himself a great sinner? He has a standard; he measures himself by it; and he almost, or altogether, comes up to it; and how can he be troubled respecting his sins? How can he but be whole and alive in his own opinion? How can he but consider himself as almost a perfect man? Alas! how many among us and around us are blinding and deceiving themselves, and dreaming away their probationary existence, under this fatal delusion! Ignorant of the law of God, and consequently and necessarily ignorant of their own characters and wants!

We may suppose another man, who has somewhat higher conceptions of the Divine law. He believes that, in addition to what has been stated, God requires of him a decent attention to the subject of religion: he must have a Bible, and must occasionally read it: he must pay some regard to the Sabbath; he must have a seat in the sanctuary, must assist in supporting some religious teacher, and (as often as is convenient) must go and listen to his instructions. On special occasions, or when he feels in a mood for it, he must even pray. Such are *his* ideas of the law of God; and he endeavors to live up to it, and he flatters himself, perhaps, that he does live up to it: for, in addition to relative and social duties, he does pay a decent outward respect to the services of religion; he does read his Bible, and attend public worship, more or less; he does pay some regard to the Sabbath; at times he does attempt to pray; and he thinks himself, not only a moral, but a *religious* man: he does his duty, as he understands it; is alive in his own opinion, and cannot think that he has any thing to fear. Now it is not possible that this man, more than the one last supposed, should be convinced of sin, or come to any just conceptions of his own character, until he opens his eyes upon the law of God. The difficulty with him may be, not that he does not measure *himself* by the standard he has adopted, but *he has a wrong standard;* and

hence, the more closely he applies it, the more danger, as it must inevitably, and in every instance, lead him to a wrong result. The case with this man is much as it was with the apostle previous to conversion; he is "alive, without the law;" and he needs to experience the same change with the holy apostle, and to have it accomplished by the same means. He needs *the commandment* to be set home upon him, that a sense of sin may be revived in his heart, and he may see himself to be spiritually dead. He needs first to understand *the law*, that he may come to a knowledge of his sins.

Still further to illustrate the principle under consideration, and show how, under all circumstances, the views which persons entertain of themselves correspond with those which they have of the law, we may suppose another case: it is that of a man who believes that God requires something more of his creatures than mere forms; that he has enjoined a *spiritual* religion; one involving a change of the affections, demanding a degree of separation from the world, and conferring on those who enjoy it much mental peace; and to the possession of this inestimable treasure he trusts he has attained. He has passed through a process of what he conceives to be awakening and conversion; has made a public profession of his faith; feels that he has done, and is doing, all that is necessary; and is for the most part well satisfied with himself and with his prospects. Of course he feels none of that deep humiliation and self-loathing which characterized the experience of Job, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and can hardly account for the painful anxieties and humbling confessions of some eminent Christians in modern times; but he thinks he understands what religion is, endeavors to live up to its requisitions, discovers but few remaining deficiencies, and is not often disquieted on account of his sins. It would be superfluous for me to say, that I consider this man's experience altogether spurious and deceptive. The case has been introduced for the purpose of showing how inadequate views of the Divine law may lead to unfounded hopes, and to a false and Pharisaical peace, not only in the mere formalist, but in those who profess to believe, and to be interested, in experimental godliness. Indeed, the danger of deception at this point is as great, to say the least, as at any other; and false hopes entertained here may be even more difficult to be dispelled than those which are founded on grosser conceptions of the nature of the Divine requirements. They cannot be dispelled in either case, until the law of God comes home with light and power to the slumbering conscience, and effectually teaches the deluded subject of them that he is "dead in trespasses and sins."

What is the law of God, of which so much has been here said? A plain question this, and a vitally important one. *What is the law of God?* The following passages may be said to comprise the whole of it:—"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.*" "*Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*" "*Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do; do all to the glory of God.*" "*Wherefore glorify God, in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" These are specimens of the Divine law—comprehensive specimens—which may in truth be said to comprise it all. And whoever considers them attentively, candidly, and seriously, must perceive, in a moment, that they comprise very much. In comparison with such a law, what are external relative duties, the customs and decencies of social life? and what is a decent outward respect to the services

of religion? No more, my friends, than a drop to the ocean! No more than an indivisible point is to the immensity of space! That holy law, which the Psalmist describes as "exceeding broad," spreads all over performances such as these, and covers and swallows them all up. We must *love God*, at all times, in all places, and with all the heart. We must fear and serve him, and him *only*, constantly and for ever. We must glorify him in all our faculties of body and of soul, so that whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do,—even the most common actions of life, such as eating, and drinking, and ministering to our bodily necessities,—*all* must be done to the glory of God. This is the standard by which we are to decide upon our characters here, and according to which we must be judged in the future world. We cannot alter it if we would; for it is immutable as the eternal throne. Heaven and earth might sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle be taken from this holy law. We may spin out as many theories, and frame as many inventions, as we please; they are all as things of naught, and can never supersede, for a moment, the holy and unchangeable law of God.

Let, then, the man who is living upon his relative and social duties, and superficial observances, and thus laying the flattering unction to his soul—let him throw away the false standards of character which he has adopted, take the rule which God has given him, and faithfully apply it. The application may cause him pain and alarm, but let him not shrink back. He must come to this rule sooner or later, and he had better come honestly to it in season. "True," he may say to himself, "I have endeavored to be just and honest in my intercourse with others; I have the reputation of being a good neighbor, and a good member of society; I have even assumed the Christian profession and name;—but is this *all* that God requires of me? This is all I have to offer;—is it enough? The Divine law, I find, reaches to the heart; and it becomes me carefully to look within, and see what has been passing there. Has the love of *God* reigned within me; or the love of *self* and the *world?* Have I been serving *God*, or *myself?* Has it been my habitual, predominating purpose to glorify God, or to promote my own supposed interest and happiness? In all I have done, have I kept God in view, and acted from a regard to his authority and glory? Or have I not often forgotten him, thought little of him, and lived much as though there was no such Being?"

Let the self-righteous and self-confident deal with themselves after this manner, taking the holy law of God as it stands, and fearlessly and faithfully applying it to their souls; and they cannot long be altogether blinded in respect to their true characters. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, *enlightening the eyes;*" and if they take it and use it as they ought, it will, it must enlighten them. They will soon see how the case stands with them. In the great *extent* of the Divine requirements, reaching to the thoughts, the affections, to all the secret springs of action, and requiring that the *love of God* move and direct all; the sinner will see the number and extent of his transgressions. He will see ten thousand things to be sin, which he never supposed were sin before. His transgressions will rise up to view one after another, till, like black and gloomy clouds, they completely overwhelm him. He will find them to be, like the stars in the sky, or the sands on the ocean shore, innumerable.

In the inviolable *strictness* of God's law, and in the awful sanctions by

which it is enforced, he will see that not one of these innumerable transgressions is a trifle. Every sin he has committed is a great sin, imposing a debt which he cannot cancel, imprinting a stain upon the soul which he cannot wash away. What, then, he may well exclaim, is the amount of them *all!* What the insupportable burthen which they all impose! What the crimson stains imprinted by them all!

In the perfect *purity* and *propriety* of the law of God, the convicted sinner will come at length to see, that his sins are as base and detestable as they are numerous and great. He is not only ruined and lost, but guilty and vile. He cannot now bear a view of his own character. With humbled Job, he begins to "abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Bring now *the Savior* before this weeping, trembling, relenting, though almost despairing penitent; let in a ray of light from Calvary upon his dark, and troubled, and tossed soul; and Oh how he will catch it! With what earnestness and gratitude will he greet it! It will be to him as life from the dead! He feels now his *need* of a Savior—his perishing need; he sees the Savior presented to be just what he needs; and with emotions unutterable he casts himself upon his mighty arm. And can it otherwise be than that the Savior, thus embraced, will be precious to him? precious incomparably beyond all others?

The inimitable Cowper relates, that for months after his conversion, he could not speak or bear the name of Jesus without weeping. The very mention of this precious name would at once melt him into a flood of tears. And, my friends, there was no enthusiasm in this. Why should he not weep? And why should not every Christian weep, when he thinks of the dying love of Jesus, and of his own infinite *indebtedness* to this bleeding love? Why should not every Christian weep, when he thinks from what merited degradation and misery he has been delivered, and to what glorious hopes and prospects he (an unworthy sinner) has been exalted, through the sacrifice and sufferings of a bleeding Savior?

The subject to which we have attended is one of great interest and importance in its application to several classes of persons; and, in the first place, to *professing Christians*. Would you, my brethren, be engaged, active, growing, useful Christians? Do you desire and pray, that your love may be ardent, and your repentance deep, and your faith strong, and your zeal constant, and your hopes substantial? You will then cultivate an intimate and thorough acquaintance with your own hearts. And in order to this, you will look into them often, in the clear light of *God's holy law*. Remember that this is your standard; carry it always with you; apply it frequently, and apply it with an unsparing hand. Thus, you will see, and feel, and lament your deficiencies. You will grow in a knowledge of your sins. And growing in this important knowledge, you will grow in every thing which stands connected with it; will grow in humility, grow in penitence, grow in faith, grow in love, and in all the graces and virtues of the Christian. Your course will thus be triumphant and happy, while you press onward and mount upward in your preparation for eternal rest.

There may be some present who have been aroused from carnal security —in whose minds the slumbers of sin have been broken—but who think that they are not yet sufficiently convinced of sin, and have not that deep and painful sense of it which is necessary, in order to their conversion and salva-

tion: This subject, my friends, addresses itself to you. If you need more deep and thorough convictions, you here see how they are to be obtained. Acquaint yourselves fully with the law of God. Study it, think of it, understand it, and measure and judge yourselves by it. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." If you have not yet come to a knowledge of your sins, it is because you have not tried yourselves faithfully, and by the proper standard. You have not yet searched your deceitful hearts to the bottom, and brought home the commandment with light and power. Begin now to deal more faithfully with yourselves. Be willing to know the worst of your case. And humbly implore the Divine Spirit to search you as with candles, and set your sins in order before your eyes.

There may be those present—it would be strange if there were not—whose sins have never given them any trouble, and who feel no concern respecting the future destiny of their souls. They have endeavored to live decently—have never done any thing which they think very criminal—consider themselves as good as their neighbors—and why should they be troubled or afraid? Just so, my friends, the apostle reasoned and comforted himself in his state of blindness and stupidity, while he was "alive without the law." He regarded himself as very moral, very religious; and who had more reason to hope than he? But you will remember, that if Paul had not become an altered man—if he had lived and died in this state of formality, he must inevitably have perished. So he judged himself afterward, and do not think me uncharitable when I say, that unless you become very different persons from what you are at present—unless you wake up to new views respecting your character and wants, you too must perish. For, secure and blinded in your sins, feeling in no need of a Savior, spurning at the offers of his bleeding love, and trusting to the works of your own hands—how can you expect *salvation*, on the ground of the gospel? How shall you be brought to repentance, while you feel that you have done little or nothing to repent of? And how shall you come to Christ for help, or entreat his mercy, while you do not feel that you need the one or the other? What remains, then, persisting in your present course, but that you must flatter and dream life away, and never awake to the reality of your condition, till you wake up in eternity?

But why persist in the course you are now pursuing? Why not begin to think, reflect, and be wise in season? Why not awake *now?* Why not take the holy rule which God has given you, apply it to your deceitful hearts, and bring out the result? Such a trial, if faithfully undertaken and accomplished, may terrify and distress you, but it cannot injure you. It may, and it will, destroy all your carnal peace; but this peace must be destroyed, before that peace of God, which passeth all understanding, can be the portion of your souls. It will open your eyes to new views of your character, destiny, and wants, and will lead you to pray, as the beggar did, "Jesus, thou son of David, *have mercy on me.*" And the moment you utter this prayer in truth and sincerity, that Jesus who had mercy on the imploring beggar will doubtless have mercy upon you. He will wipe away your tears, and wash out your sins, and comfort you with consolations of which the world are ignorant. "The law of the Lord is perfect, *converting the soul;* the testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise the simple;* the statutes of the Lord are right, REJOICING THE HEART."

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SERMON CXXXVIII.

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MEANS OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

Amos vii. 2.—*By whom shall Jacob arise?—for he is small.*

The prophet Amos, though of humble origin and occupation, was distinguished for the loftiness of his conceptions, and the energy and pointedness of his ministrations. In this chapter he is represented as beholding in vision the judgments of God about to visit the people of Israel. His benevolent spirit was excited, and he earnestly besought the Lord to stay his anger and avert the threatened evils. The text contains the argument of his prayer. If the wasting calamities denounced should come upon Israel and cut off the sources of subsistence, and thus diminish their numbers and weaken their strength, how could the Church recover from its depression, how could the breach be repaired? *By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small?* The argument prevailed. The Lord repented him of the evil and delayed the deserved judgments.

The text, independent of its particular application, may be regarded as a question of great interest to churches under trying circumstances. Jacob represents the people of God. The obvious import of the inquiry is,

How shall a church that is small, or in a low state, be built up, revived, raised from its depression?

In furnishing an answer to this question it will be necessary to examine those parts of Church history, inspired and uninspired, which record revivals of religion. In discussing the subject we intend to guard against speculation and theory, and refer only to facts. It ought to be distinctly stated, that the great principle of God's moral government is to be acknowledged, as well in attempting to promote the salvation of *others* as in working out *our own*,—that it is *God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* For it is as true of three thousand as of a few truly converted, that they are *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;* and after all the well directed and long continued efforts of men to build up the Church, it is *not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.* This should always be mentioned both to chasten pride and to encourage faith.

The object aimed at is not merely an increase of numbers, but *a revival of pure and undefiled religion.* A numerous or a wealthy church is not necessarily an efficient one. Numbers often weaken the moral influence. A revival of religion is a resuscitation of the graces of God's people, connected with the conversion of sinners. Christians then begin to live, for a time, as they ought *always to live.* What question can possess more interest to a minister or a

church, than this,—*how can the number of deeply pious, devoted servants of Christ be increased?*

I. The *first* step preliminary to every other, is A PREPARATION OF THE SOIL. Thus *saith the Lord, break up the fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.* Every church, from which the converting influences of the Spirit are withdrawn, must have within it some evils which need to be removed. For the Lord is with a people, while they are with him; *if they seek him, he will be found of them, but if they forsake him he will forsake them.* When his special presence is withdrawn they have provoked him by their sins. A single Achan may arrest the victories of Zion. The message from Zion's King to such a church is, *Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.* If the sin of broken vows, of blood-guiltiness, of worldly conformity, of idolatrous pursuit of wealth or honor, of contention and strife, of alienation of heart among brethren attach to the garments of professors, the evil must be ferreted out and repented of before a blessing can be expected. In many cases the observance of a day of humiliation and prayer in the Church has been followed by happy results. The people of God, humbled for past delinquency, deeply affected to think of the ruin they have been instrumental of bringing upon sinners, by the unchristian examples they have set, the levity and folly of their lives, their remissness in duty, and especially their reluctance to speak to them on the subject of salvation, have openly and publicly made confession before the world, and renewed their covenant before the Lord.

II. As there is a fixed and invariable connexion between the faith and faithfulness of God's people and the conversion of sinners, the Church is next to be urged TO CULTIVATE A SPIRIT OF GRACE AND SUPPLICATION. This is agreeable to the order mentioned in prophecy. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts.* And again, *I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication.* These predictions, it is believed, refer to those seasons under the gospel denominated revivals of religion, when multitudes are gathered into the kingdom of God. The members of the Church individually should be reminded that the success of the cause in a measure depends upon them; they are to aim at more spirituality, more habitual seriousness, more holiness of heart and energy of character.

The grace of supplication is uniformly poured upon the members of Christ's Church previous to an extraordinary visitation of mercy. This point may be illustrated by a reference to facts. This was eminently true of the national reformation under Josiah, when the whole aspect of the Church was changed, and the leaven of piety diffused through the entire mass of the people, when the foundations of many generations were rebuilt, and the worship of Jehovah was restored.

The surprising change effected by the ministry of Ezra, that issued in the renovation of all Israel, was preceded by special humiliation and prayer.

Previous to the opening of the windows of heaven to pour out a blessing upon the Jews in the days of Malachi, we are told that they *that feared the Lord spake often to one another;* they assembled for social worship and united in earnest prayer; *and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.*

A continued season of prayer was connected with the great revival at Jerusalem. *The day of* Pentecost was fifty days after the resurrection of Christ. *He was with his disciples* forty days speaking of the things pertaining to the

kingdom of God. After he had given them their instructions, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. *Then*, it is said, *they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, and when they were come in they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James and John, and the rest of the apostles: These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.* It appears that in a retired place, in an upper room, supposed by some to be the place where he celebrated the passover, they spent *ten days in prayer*. While thus waiting for the promised blessing, breathing the atmosphere of devotion, kindling the fire of their zeal at the altar of God, bracing themselves to the great work of the ministry by wrestling in prayer, the Spirit of God descended and filled all the place where they were assembled. *They continued in prayer;* which is the only way to wait for the promise. When, therefore, the day of Pentecost was fully come, it found them all *with one accord in one place;* and under no other circumstances may the disciples of Christ expect to receive the influences of the Spirit. Unity of feeling and of views must characterize that people whom the Comforter will visit.

There is reason to believe the establishment of the gospel in Philippi, and the planting of that flourishing church was connected with the prayers of the pious females who met for prayer in that deep retirement on the banks of the river.

It is especially true of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that God *will be inquired of by the house of Israel* to do it for them.

If there have been places which God has seemed to bless with his special presence, where this previous waking out of sleep, this rising up in the energy of holy faith to take hold of the Covenant, has not been witnessed on the part of his people, still upon inquiry it has always been found that some humble, devoted Christians, unobserved, have wept in secret over the declension of vital religion, the increase of vice and immorality; and perhaps like the apostles in Jerusalem, have retired to an upper room to pour out their hearts before God, that he would return in his glory and build up Zion.

We have collected some facts from authentic sources to confirm our position, which we deem of vital importance in this discussion, that the effectual, fervent prayers of God's people are intimately connected with seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

The commencement of that great revival of religion in Easthampton, on Long Island, 1764, which in some respects resembled as much the day of Pentecost as any that have since taken place, is thus described by the venerable Dr. Buell. "In the beginning of the year 1764, there appeared some hopeful tokens that the Lord was preparing his way for a gracious visitation. The absolute necessity and importance of the Divine influence, in order to the revival of religion, became more frequently the subject of serious consideration among the godly. *Some of the Lord's people became wrestling Jacobs for the Divine influences.* Our assemblies grew larger, and their attention more engaged."

At the close of an account of a powerful work of God in Bridgehampton, in 1800, in which great numbers were hopefully brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, the writer states, "It may be added that the above revival of religion appears to have taken place *in answer to prayer.* Previous to it, it had been a time of long and awful declension. But in the preceding spring, by certain communications respecting the revivals of religion in other places, a small number of Christians appeared desirous of attending meetings of special prayer for Zion. Such meetings were accordingly introduced, and an unusual spirit of prayer seemed to be granted."

After a full examination of this subject as presented in the numerous detailed histories of these favored seasons to Zion; and after fifteen years' experience, *we hesitate not to say, that it will generally be found that a spirit of prayer,*

like John the Baptist, is the harbinger sent to prepare the way for the Messenger of the Covenant to come to his temple, and for the triumphant entrance of Zion's King in visible power and majesty in the chariot of his Word.

If the way of the Lord in his merciful visitation be always thus prepared in the hearts of his people, we have a standard by which to judge of the religious state of a church. *The work of God will advance and prevail in proportion to the spirit of prayer that is kept up among his people.* If the spirit of God be sensibly withdrawn, it proves not so much his sovereignty, as the stupidity, unbelief, and unfaithfulness of his professed friends. The ministers of Jesus will labor with success, their messages will be accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, so long as his disciples hold up their hands by prayer. This is finely illustrated in the case of Moses whose hands were sustained by Aaron and Hur, while Amalek and Israel contended in Rephidin. (Exod. 17. 8–12.)

Let the church then that would enjoy a revival of pure and undefiled religion give themselves to prayer. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer;* that is, his people will come to him feeling their destitution, they will pray as the perishing mendicant begs for bread; and while thus pleading as for life, he will *not despise*, or turn away from *their prayer.* The memorable words of our Lord apply as well to the blessing of a gracious visit as to other favors, *Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

The message of Jehovah to Israel by the prophet Jeremiah may be addressed to every church disposed to take measures to secure his special presence. *Thus saith the Lord, after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,* that is, the end of your faith, your redemption from bondage. The language of indolence and false confidence in view of such unequivocal declarations, would be, The word of the Lord will stand, the vision will come, let us wait for it. But what saith the Scripture? In the next sentence it is said, THEN *shall ye call upon me;* instead of tempting Providence, the Church shall arise and stir themselves at the sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, *and ye shall go*—some steps are to be taken, some efforts made —*and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* You perceive the degree of *earnestness* with which prayer is to be offered, viz. with *all the heart.*

Individuals are not to wait till the whole church awake, but when God is about to revive his work there will be some who will feel the pressure of a burden which can be removed only by laying it over upon the arm of the Lord. A desire will spring up in the soul for the conversion of sinners which will express itself in secret in groanings that cannot be uttered. The imminent danger of the impenitent will be so clearly perceived, that they are *seen* to stand on a slippery steep overhanging the burning billows of eternal wrath. The bleeding compassion of Jesus will be felt to the very center of the soul. With such views and feelings, how can one refrain from strong crying and tears? There will be times when the Christian, to use the language of one who has been long in the school of Christ, and been honored in winning souls, has "a desire which almost breaks the heart;—a desire which swallows up every other; which is more intense than any one can conceive who has not felt it. The man goes bowed down all the day long under sorrows too great for him to bear, because men keep not God's law,—because they are bound to that land of *darkness from which there is no return.* He sees it utterly impossible for him *to enjoy life any more, unless the Spirit be poured out from on high. Nothing in the universe does he desire so much.* Nothing else in the universe will sat-

isfy him. The mighty care hangs immoveably upon his heart. It goes with him from morning till noon—from noon till night,—and cannot be shaken off for any other matter. It is the last to press upon him when he sinks to sleep; it is the first to meet him when he opens his eyes.

All this is consistent with a sweet sense of dependence upon God, a full conviction that God, who is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him than parents to give good gifts to their children, has reserved the times and seasons in his own hand. If the bursting heart were not relieved by the thought that God is on the throne, the conflict would be more than could be endured.

III. A church that would witness a refreshing from the presence of the Lord, must not only stir themselves up to take hold of the Covenant by fervent, persevering prayer, but they must CULTIVATE A SPIRIT OF DEEP AND LIVING PIETY.

A temporary excitement, a glow of animal feeling, a flourish of unnatural animation, is not a preparation that is from the Lord; it may gratify vanity and answer a party purpose, but a permanent blessing will not follow.

Usually, before God revives his work, his people become sensible that it is high time to awake out of sleep. The evidence that they have more of the grace of supplication is, that they exhibit more of the life of religion. They become less worldly-minded, more attached to the house of prayer and the sanctuary of God. *Wilt thou not revive us again*, inquired the Psalmist, *that thy people may rejoic in thee?*

Various means are blessed to arouse a slumbering church or more powerfully to awaken the increasing interest that is beginning to be felt. Sometimes an alarming death, sometimes the deep visible distress and pungent conviction of a hardened sinner, or of some important individual, will give new fervor to the prayers, new vigor to the life, new impulse to the zeal of God's people.

The revival at Jerusalem (which, apart from the miraculous appearances which convinced the multitude, but did not affect the character of the work, is the great exemplar and standard of all revivals of true religion,) was *preceded by an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit upon the disciples.* Even while they were in the upper room engaged in prayer, *suddenly*, not unexpectedly, *there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire*, (fit emblem of the energy and fervor with which they were to preach the gospel), *and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* By this anointing they were furnished with the *graces* of the Spirit, were brought under his sanctifying influence. They were more than ever delivered from the reigning power of sin, became more spiritual in their affections, more heavenly in their temper, more devoted in their lives. They felt all at once kindling within them a holy ardor which could be damped by no obstacle, and were endued with a fortitude which shrank from no danger. They were filled with the *consolations of the Spirit*, rejoicing more than ever in the fellowship of the saints, the love of Christ, the riches of grace, the communion of the Father, and the hope of heaven. They were also endowed with the *gifts* of the Spirit, —miraculous powers for the furtherance of the gospel.

Such special communications of grace to the people of God previous to a large ingathering of souls are not unfrequent.

That living piety which is always revived in the church when the arm of the Lord is revealed, is based upon a knowledge of the great doctrines of the gospel, particularly the character, law, and government of God, the divine glory and wonderful work of Christ, the office and agency of the Spirit,—in a word, the ruin and recovery of man. Hence sound doctrinal preaching, searching exhibitions of truth, so far from retarding the work of the Spirit, are of great *service in preparing* the way of the Lord.

A church that would receive a blessing must be brought to feel that a higher exercise of grace is indispensable; they must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; they must rise up to greater attainments in godliness. And it is a dark sign (to say nothing of the unlovely spirit exhibited) to be unwilling to have the standard of the gospel set high, and the delinquency of the church exposed, that they may repent and return to the Lord. A spirit of declension, like that of apostacy, often shrinks from the light and is opposed to the truth; but the wound must be probed, if it is to be healed; the sin must be exposed, if pardon is sought.

Deep vital piety must be awakened in the church if any permanent results are to be looked for; for God blesses nothing else. There may be much apparent success without it, but nothing that will endure, that will stand the test of the last day. Hay, wood, and stubble (by which we are to understand every thing of merely human device) will be consumed, the work of the Lord only will continue. Talents and wealth and influence have failed, when a few feeble, praying Christians have succeeded. One conscientious, holy man is a host. The strength of the first Christians was in their piety. Cyprian's holiness and self-sacrificing spirit was the secret of his unparalleled success. The Reformers, more by faith and truth than learning or native energy, succeeded in lifting the church from the lowest point of depression to light and life. The blessing that was in the Pilgrims is to be sought in their heaven-born Christianity. And the Moravians have accomplished wonders because they were filled with the Holy Ghost and faith.

Evangelical truth awakens an unconquerable attachment, an indomitable spirit; it kindles an undying flame which many waters cannot quench. He only is to be regarded as a gospel Christian, and will be favored in being instrumental of good to others, who *holds forth the word of life*, whose heart's desire and prayer to God is, that sinners may be saved.

IV. PLAIN, WELL-TIMED PREACHING is another means of building up the church of Christ. It is appointed by the great Head of the Church. *Is not my word like as the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

It must be plain, or the attention of sinners will be diverted from the subject and from themselves to the splendor of the effort or the labor bestowed upon it; it must be affectionate, or the heart will not be unbarred to hear the message; it must be direct and faithful, or the truth will not bear upon the conscience; it must be in season, or the work will not receive an impulse.

The revival at Jerusalem (to which reference cannot be too frequently made) was a result of the preaching of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. *Now, when they* HEARD *this* (it was after *hearing*—Peter's sermon was the instrument) *—they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?* Peter's sermon, which became the sword of the Spirit to pierce the stout-hearted Jews, is a model of that kind of preaching which has always been owned of God. We cannot now attempt to give any thing like an analysis of it. The apostle evidently aimed at impressing conviction upon the consciences of his hearers, which ought to be the end of all public instruction; for if we fail of convincing the sinner of his guilt, the offers of the gospel will be an idle sound to him.

The truths which the apostle preached were the most humbling to human pride, the most offensive to the natural heart; calculated at once to awaken the deepest solicitude and bring the sinner into the dust. So far from offering any *palliation for their crimes*, he aggravated them by every possible circumstance. *He thrust the charge of murder* into their bosom, which pierced like a barbed *arrow from the quiver* of the Almighty. His sermon "was an ocean of

terror," and each reflection a wave that overwhelmed and distressed their souls."

The idea that God is a sovereign, that he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that he has all hearts in his hand, and is under no obligation to save any sinner in his natural state, is considered by many a very discouraging doctrine, and one, though acknowledged to be fully taught in the Bible, that ought to be very seldom preached. So did not Peter think. He brought clearly into view the absolute dependence of the sinner, and his awful criminality in opposing the designs of God. The great point is to make the rebel sinner feel his guilt. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* The terrors of the Lord are to be preached, but so as to *persuade* men. The grace of the gospel is to be preached, but so as to *humble* and subdue men —to make the sinner sensible of his sin and ingratitude in rejecting it.

If we examine the records of those revivals of true religion which have occurred so frequently in the church, we shall find that the truths usually styled the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel have been uniformly the most blessed by the Spirit of God.

"I think I have found," says President Edwards, in his '*Narrative of Surprising Conversions*,' "that no discourses have been more remarkably blessed than those in which the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty with regard to the salvation of sinners, and his just liberty, with regard to answering the prayers, or succeeding the pains of mere natural men, continuing such, have been insisted on. I never found so much immediate saving fruit, in any measure, of any discourses I have offered to my congregation, as some from those words, Rom. iii. 19—*That every mouth may be stopped:* endeavoring to show from thence that it would be just with God for ever to reject and cast off mere natural men."

It is not only sermons *on* revivals but *revival sermons*, exhibiting the purity and extent and righteous sanctions of the divine law, the deep corruption and alienation of the heart by nature, the work of the Spirit, justification by faith, the duty of immediate repentance and love, which are to accomplish the work of quickening the church and saving men.

If no doctrines should be preached but such as are gratifying to the natural feelings, we should have reason to fear that the conversions which would follow (if any fruits at all appeared) would be such as would fully evince from whence the power proceeded. No truths but those which bring out the sinner's guilt, and expose his depravity, will ever humble his soul and lead him to Christ. It will not do to conceal part of the counsel of God because it may be perverted; to withhold some of the truths of the Bible because the weak and the wavering may wrest them to their own destruction.

Let every minister of the New Testament, who would see the work of the Lord prosper in his hand, *devote* himself to his work, and preach like Baxter and Brainerd, like Paul and Peter, endeavoring to make his hearers *feel* that they are lost and perishing sinners, and pointing them at once to the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world; and we shall not want seals to our ministry.

V. It will be expected that in speaking of the means of promoting a revival of religion, I should notice in this connexion PROTRACTED MEETINGS for public worship. These are not distinct from, but only a connected method of preaching the gospel—a concentrated use of this great instrumentality.

These meetings have become so common among evangelical Christians of every name that they are no longer to be regarded as peculiar to any denomination. They are not of recent origin. The Jews from the commencement of their polity held them; they were revived by Nehemiah. The Church of Scotland has always observed a similar religious service. No serious Christian can object to *such meetings*, properly conducted, for bringing divine truth to bear *upon the heart. It is like* bringing a number of Sabbaths into immediate succession. *Religion is* placed so prominently before the mind that the world

excluded. The heart is kept fixed upon God; the cross of Christ is exhibited so constantly that its subduing dissolving influence is felt; the utter ruin of the sinner is held up so clearly, and his guilt so unceasingly urged upon him, that he is led to ask, What shall I do?

These meetings are to be regarded as extra means; and if they are repeated so frequently as to lose that character, their peculiar efficacy will be lost; nay, they may produce a contrary effect, and throw a revival off to a greater distance.

The most judicious and tried friends of true revivals have felt, that there is some danger to be apprehended from these protracted meetings. They are a powerful means of awakening animal feeling, of rousing the public mind. Such means, like the press, or like the power of steam, in the natural world, are to be used with great discretion, and under a deep sense of responsibility to God.

VI. Another mean of promoting a revival is PASTORAL VISITATION. We must do to the world at home what the church is commanded to do to the world abroad, preach the gospel to every creature. Divine truth must be made to bear upon every heart. Men throw a shield around them when they hear the messages of God in the sanctuary; they take shelter as it were behind the crowd; there is a sort of distribution going on in a large assembly, by which an individual receives only a certain portion of the message, or takes to himself only a share of the reproof and warning, the whole of which he needs. Multitudes never enter the house of God; and of those that do, many do not realize that the gospel is an overture presented in the name of Christ, a word of salvation sent to them from heaven. If taste is gratified, or the understanding instructed, it is all that was expected;—the heart remains unmoved, the dominion of sin is unbroken, the castle of the strong man is undisturbed.

To remedy an evil so great, and accomplish the object aimed at in the appointment of gospel institutions, the salvation of the soul, men must be followed to the fireside, to the place of retirement; they must be pursued "through every lane of life;" and the claims of God must be urged upon the heart with a directness and point which cannot be evaded. The private ear must be obtained, and eternal truth uttered in it so honestly that conscience will respond to the charge, *thou* art the man.

More especially is private dealing necessary to deepen the impression that may have been made by the public ministration of truth. If the preaching of the Sabbath be not followed up in the week by frequent visits, the seed sown will either be caught away or choked; or, to adopt another illustration of Scripture, the goodness that began to appear will pass away like the morning cloud and early dew. If repeated application of truth cannot be made, it is often wise not to aim to strike a blow; for a heart tempered by such a process of softening and hardening may soon become like adamant.

I have never known a course of faithful affectionate visitation, pursued and persisted in, that did not result in a blessing to the church. The kindly feelings of the heart are awakened: the soil is thus prepared to receive the good seed. And sinners are made to feel their individual responsibility.

Family visitation is indispensable in a system of means to build up the church of Christ. Nor is this to be confined to the pastor alone. So many souls are agitating the great question, so many causes operate to divert the attention and remove impressions of seriousness, that the duty of personal instruction and warning must be performed by all the faithful. This is a most difficult duty. If it is practicable, each individual of a family should be particularly addressed and isolated from the others. These solemn visits should be short, and usually closed with prayer; if good impressions cannot be *left*, (for it is more important *to leave a good* impression than even to produce one), it is often injudicious to *make an appeal.*

It is infinitely desirable that the pastor and his helpers should strive together;

that their views of truth and duty should harmonize; that they should hold the same language in respect to the sinner's guilt and danger, and his *immediate* duty to repent. It is especially necessary that they be perfectly agreed in conversing with those who are inquiring the way to Zion.

Even pious, well-intentioned persons often encourage anxious sinners to remain impenitent without being aware of it. This is done not unfrequently by expressing unqualified joy at seeing their solicitude about the salvation of their souls. This often relieves the pressure upon the conscience, induces a belief that they are not in *immediate* and imminent danger, or such expressions of joy would not be made. The very countenance of a Christian ought to preach to the sinner, no matter how anxious, and say to him that there is great reason to fear he will perish. For many anxious sinners have perished; they have waited, refused to obey God, and thus grieved the Spirit: their deep distress has never ended in true joy; and who knows that it may not be so with the sinner before us? Can we encourage a rebel heart for a moment? Up to the point of submission it is enmity against God.

Again, others are encouraged by telling them that they are in a good way. While they are impenitent, however many tears they may shed, they are in their sins, they are resisting the light: how, then, can they be said to be in a good way? Is it good to withhold the heart from God?—to reject Jesus Christ? Is it good to prolong a controversy with God, and contend still longer with their Maker? They are *not* in a good way; and it is neither scriptural nor safe to tell them so.

We must not consult our sympathies, but the oracles of God, in dealing with the souls of men. If the surgeon yielded to his feelings, rather than to his sense of duty and the convictions of his judgment, he might often sacrifice life.

Some are told *to persevere;* this may be equally dangerous advice; for if they are *now* cherishing opposition, if they are *now* finding fault with the law, (which is true of every unsubdued heart), how can they be told to persevere in such a state? *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker.* All that can be said is, this is a fearful controversy. God will never surrender his claims, nor lower his terms. If it do not end in unconditional submission, it *will* end in eternal destruction. Until the sinner cease to contend, the work is not done. O how hard to give God the throne. Proud man would have his own way—but this is his ruin.

Sometimes injury is done, inadvertently, by telling weeping inquirers that either yourself or some established Christian of their acquaintance were much longer under conviction than they have been—thus justifying their delay, palliating their rebellion, or flattering a vain hope of future repentance while cherishing an unsubdued spirit. The Bible makes no distinction. Its language to *all* is, *to-day—after so long a time,* after so many messages rejected, so many mercies abused, so much light resisted—*to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*

VII. I ought not to omit in this enumeration of means to carry forward a revival of religion, the appointment of MEETINGS FOR SERIOUS INQUIRERS.

These meetings should not be commenced too soon, upon every appearance of quickened attention; nor should they be deferred too long. Their efficacy has been so fully tested, that there can be no doubt of their value.

These meetings, unless very injudiciously conducted, become awfully solemn by the presence of God's Holy Spirit, seen in the deep silence, the tearful countenance, the fixed posture of the awakened and burdened sinner. They should be short, and be made the place of special instruction to that class who visit them.

But after all, these special means must be left to the wisdom and experience of those who are employed as instruments in the hands of God of carrying forward his work. One taught of the Spirit and ardently devoted to the cause o

Christ will resort to no measures which are not believed to be warranted in the Scriptures, and which are found to be exceptionable or injurious. A time of refreshing is a period of great responsibility to those who watch for souls. Direction as well as help must be sought from God, who made heaven and earth, who will give liberally, and without upbraiding.

And now, brethren, is it not *time* for *us* to seek the Lord till he come and rain righteousness upon us? Do not men make void God's law? Are not sinners hastening rapidly to ruin? Have we not slept long enough over the interests of Zion? Have not the vows of God which are upon us been neglected long enough? Is it not high time to awake out of sleep?

Is there not *encouragement* to seek the Lord? Are there not indications of good in many places? Is there no evidence that Jesus is willing to pass this way? Are there not some waiting for him? Why then do we fold our hands? Let us arise and call upon God, lest the curse of Meroz fall upon us, because we come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against themighty.

Let us arise and build; the God of heaven he will prosper us. Can we be indifferent at such a time, when such mighty movements are visible both in the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of darkness? No. By all that is desirable in the salvation of souls, by all that is binding in the authority of Jehovah, by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you, strive together in prayer and effort for advancing the work of God. AMEN.

SERMON CXXXIX.

BY MARK TUCKER, D.D.

ALARM TO THE CARELESS.

ISA. xxxii. 11.—*Be troubled, ye careless ones.*

CARELESSNESS, indifference to religion in a rational being, cannot but excite surprise and occasion grief in every serious mind. Religion is an infinite reality; the gospel is a true record, and worthy of all acceptation; its claims are high and paramount to every other; the doctrine of immortality is clearly brought to light in it; we are fully taught that the present life is a probationary season, and we cannot but know that in an unexpected moment we may be called to give an account of the deeds done in the body. And can any be found in these solemn circumstances indifferent to their highest interests? What shall be said of the man who cares for none of these things which the infinite God has revealed, into which the angels desire to look, which are not vain—either doubtful or unimportant; but of unutterable value, and will stand when heaven and earth shall pass away?

It makes the heart of a minister sad to know that there are those among his flock who neglect their souls; nor can he be faithful to them without dropping a note of warning upon their ear. Let us inquire, then, with great plainness,

I. *Who* are the careless ones?—and,

II. *Why* should they be troubled?

1. Those are careless ones who *neglect the Bible.* This precious volume is *the voice of God to* a perishing world. Its main object is to rouse the attention *of sinners to the subject of* salvation. It leaves philosophy to the learned—the *arts to the ingenious*—and comes, in solemn tones and with awful authority, to *the heart and conscience* on the great business of life and immortality. It

claims and it deserves attention. It requires us to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Those who disbelieve this message and they who suffer it to be unopened and unexamined are in the same condemnation.

That man must be indifferent to the welfare of his country who never examines the principles of its constitution, nor reads the journals of its history; who is ignorant of the character of its laws, and the doings of its legislators. And is he not a careless one, on the most momentous of all subjects, who seldom reads the record of eternal life; who is at no pains to become acquainted with his duty and his destiny? The man who neglects the Bible can never be regarded as a serious man. The views it gives of God, of Christ, of accountability, of our relations to other beings and other worlds, cannot fail to affect the heart. The very reason why many read it so little, is to avoid reflection on these great subjects.

2. Those are careless ones who *neglect prayer.* This is exclusively a religious observance: all who have any proper feelings towards God must regard it as a solemn duty. Even the light of nature teaches its necessity and importance. In the sacred Scriptures it is enjoined with great earnestness. We are directed to *pray always with all prayer and supplication.* Soon as the Holy Spirit awakens any deep solicitude about salvation, we think of prayer. Prayer is the language of dependance and of want; and whenever we think of either we are disposed to pray. The man, therefore, who casts off fear and restrains prayer before God, who neglects his closet, who never or seldom bows his knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a *careless one.*

3. Those who *neglect the Sabbath.* The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. It was appointed for his convenience and for his spiritual good. Apart from its beneficial influence upon society and upon every temporal interest, it is an institution of unspeakable importance from its bearing upon eternity. In fact, there is no religion without it. The neighborhood, the family, the individual that wilfully violates the Sabbath is destitute of religion. You perceive with what propriety they are denominated careless ones who disregard this holy day, who pervert its sacred design by attending to secular concerns, who waste the day in indolence, or spend it in riding or walking, in reading newspapers or novels.

4. Those who neglect the *institutions of the sanctuary.* It is a faithful saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The special object of the means appointed by the great Head of the Church is to secure that high end. The design of the ministry of reconciliation is mentioned in the commission given to Paul, to *open blind eyes, and turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Whenever any become anxious to know what they must do to be saved, they begin to prize the preaching of the gospel, and will be at any pains to hear the words of eternal life. On the other hand, just in proportion as the interest in religion declines will be indifference to the means of grace. See you a man who makes his attendance upon the services of God's house a matter of convenience, who avails himself of almost any excuse—a short distance, a slight variation in the weather, a trifling bodily indisposition—to be absent from the place of worship, who is there but irregularly, be assured he gives unequivocal proof that religion has very little hold upon him,—he is a *careless one.* And the same is true of him who through the entire week is so absorbed in the pursuits of this life that he has neither leisure nor disposition to attend the place of social worship.

5. In a word, those are careless ones *who live in impenitence and unbelief.* Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are indispensable to salvation. They are the distinguishing duties of the gospel. The great interests of the soul cannot be secured without them. No man can be said to *take heed to the things* that belong to his peace, while living in disobedience to

the first and great commands of Christ—to repent and do works meet for repentance—and with the heart to believe on the Son of God.

II. We proceed to inquire *why* such ought to be troubled.

In entering upon this part of the subject we are met with a discouragement. Those who are indifferent are disposed to remain so—carelessness perpetuates itself. So long as you continue thus, no matter how deeply we feel, or how earnestly we preach, we must return to our closet and inquire, with a sad spirit, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

Still it is by prophesying over dry bones that they are to live. I entreat your serious attention while I present some reasons *why* you ought to be troubled.

1. The fact that you *are careless* is a ground of alarm. It is evidence that you do not reflect upon God; for no sinner can think of Him and not be troubled. One hour's deep and solemn meditation upon his omniscience, his purity, and righteousness, would break up your apathy. Did you think of your relation to Him, his goodness to you, your obligations to Him, you could not be at ease. Ought you not to be troubled that you are surrounded by Jehovah, that you are in his hands, every moment liable to be summoned to his bar, and still indifferent, asleep in your sins? Your carelessness is evidence that you are ignorant of your true condition in the sight of God; for who, that realizes the guilt and exposure of transgression, the holy nature and fearful penalty of the law, and feels that he has broken that law and incurred that penalty, will not tremble? There is something truly frightful in false security, where the danger is real and great. Who does not pity the poor deluded victim of intemperance, who has just passed the line that decided his character as a drunkard? He still cries there is no danger—he dreams of happiness and respectability, while the hand of death is upon him; his fancied security is the most alarming symptom: could he be made to feel his danger there would be hope; but this he *will not* see, and his indifference is the touch of death.

Who, that had seen the prodigal in the midst of his cups and revels, forgetful of his father's prayers and reckless of his approaching ruin, would not have wept over his guilty thoughtlessness? If just then he had been admonished of his danger, he would doubtless have replied in anger, as the sinner often does, "Your sympathy is uncalled for, your solicitude is needless; my resources are not yet exhausted, nor do I intend to become the slave of indulgence; an occasional liberty may be taken without hazard."—Ah! how little did the wayward youth know of the wiles of the destroyer. He was then undone, but he had not yet come to himself to see it.

And such is your condition, careless sinner, but you know it not. A disease which no human skill can remove is upon your soul; it infects your blood, has penetrated your nature through; and yet you are whole in your own estimation, and need not a physician. Your apathy is the dark symptom in your case.

You are condemned, the sentence of death lies against you; and yet you are secure. Just in proportion to the character of the sentence, the nearness and certainty of its execution, is the fearfulness of the indifference you manifest. If it were a temporal loss, or the abridgment of personal liberty for life, it could be borne, apathy would not be so appalling; but when we remember that the sentence that lies against you is eternal death, imprisonment in hell—that God is the Judge who pronounced it—that this *very night* your soul may be required of you, we know not how to express our sense of the deep criminality of such carelessness. *O be troubled, ye careless ones!*

2. Another reason of alarm is, *that this indifference indicates a state of mind in which every blessing will be abused, and every warning neglected.*

The sinner's heart is represented by the barren heath of the desert, which *knoweth not when good* cometh—that receives the sweet showers of heaven, *but makes no return.* While this apathy remains, the goodness of God may be

lavished upon you, the blessings of Providence may fall around you, the kindness and love of God our Savior may be shown you, and no gratitude spring up in your heart, no tears of repentance flow. Should it not trouble you to have such a heart? While it is cherished the Savior may weep over you, the ministers of the gospel may exhort and entreat with all long-suffering and doctrine to no purpose—the tears of the Son of God may be shed in vain, and his ministers may plead in vain. How affecting that indifference, which, while it continues, renders all the methods of God's mercy to reclaim and save sinners ineffectual. Is not such a state of mind truly deplorable? A habit of body that would render every thing received for nourishment or for medicine perfectly useless would be dreadful; what then must be that moral disease which leads men to pervert every gift, to turn away from every overture, to resist every motive. Every prayer you hear leaves you far from God—every chapter of the Bible read is without effect—every sermon you hear, every funeral you attend, leaves you still in love with the world. Thus all the diversified means which a merciful God employs accomplishes nothing for your highest good; and this because you are careless.

3. You ought to be troubled when you reflect what it is you are careless about, viz. your *salvation*. The man who is indifferent about his health is unwise enough; he who is regardless of his temporal interests can expect little commiseration: what then shall be said of him who hazards the salvation of the soul by neglect. You are here on probation for eternity. Christ has died that you might live—salvation is offered in his name—indifference is unbelief. In an hour you think not of, you may be called to render up your account; by mere neglect, by this indifference you now manifest, you may lose heaven—eternal death is the fruit of a careless life, and this you may reap before to-morrow morning. What folly, what infatuation to expose your immortal interests when nothing is to be gained. O ye careless ones, awake out of sleep—you have too much at stake to waste so much of this short life. If you would only pause, you could not fail to see the inconsistency of being so eager after the vanities of this world, while you are negligent of the realities of the world to come; of being so intent upon the acquisition of wealth, that may take to itself wings and fly away, while you are indifferent about the true riches; of grasping after momentary honor, while you let go immortal glory.

4. Another cause of alarm is found in *the exposure of your present condition*. Neglect of the gospel is enough to ensure destruction. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* Many seem to think, if they escape those outbreaking sins which bring ruin upon men in this world, they are in no danger of the fearful gulf in the next; but this is a fatal mistake. Careless sinner, if you had never uttered a falsehood, or injured a neighbor, or stained your hands with a single trespass against society, you would still be in the gall of bitterness—your apathy is a crime for which no amiableness or morality can atone. You have never thought enough of God to know or to love him, or of Christ to believe in and follow him; of heaven to lay up your treasures there. Were you to die to-day in your present state of mind, your alienation of heart, your indifference to religion would exclude you from the kingdom of God. Nor would there be any thing arbitrary in this. A heart that is insensible to the claims of the gospel, that is cold and unmoved by the affecting scenes of Calvary—a sinner that can stand all the day of his probation idle, in such a world as this, surely is not meet for the inheritance of the saints. Were you, therefore, not to commit another sin, were you to remain stationary as to moral character, you would be lost. By all that is heart-rending in the idea of eternal banishment from God, in the thought of lying down in everlasting sorrow, I would *arouse you to reflection*, and entreat you to lay these things to heart.

5. Another consideration is, no more powerful means will be employed to

awaken you to the concerns of your soul. You must know you cannot be saved in your present carelessness and indifference. You do not expect it. Consider what God has done to induce you to seek Him. His words are full of point and emphasis, calculated to carry conviction to every heart, to seal up every mouth, and to sweep away every excuse: *What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? How often would I have gathered you, and you would not.* That you might know God, his works have been spread out before you, showing forth his attributes; that you might early begin to serve him, parents and teachers have instructed you from the first dawn of moral being; that you might be convinced of sin, the broad and piercing light of the law has shined down into your heart; its high and holy precepts have been placed beside your conduct, that you might mark your deficiency; that you might escape the wrath of God, the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world has been set forth as the propitiation for sin. Ministers have preached, Christian friends have entreated, the Holy Spirit has been sent down to visit your heart, and still you are careless and unconcerned about the most solemn subject in the universe. Are you waiting to be moved? There is enough now bearing upon your heart to excite half the heathen world. The presence of one missionary moves all Birmah. The heathen have heard there is an eternal hell, and they are afraid of it; but you sit unmoved. They have learned there is an eternal God, and they desire to know Him; but you say, Depart from us, we desire not a knowledge of thy ways. They ask for tracts, while some here will not receive them into their houses. They regard with unspeakable interest a servant of Jesus Christ, and will take a three months' journey to enjoy the privilege of listening to his words; while you will suffer him to stand and stretch forth his hands without heeding his message. Ah! the poor heathen will rise up in the judgment and condemn you.

O ye careless ones, what shall be done to disturb your deep slumbers? If one rising from the dead would not make *those* hear who had Moses and the prophets, what *new* thing, or solemn thing, shall be said to them who, in addition, have Christ and the apostles? There is every reason to fear you will still sleep on. The fact that you are on the slippery brink of ruin, on the sides of a volcano ready to burst forth, does not alarm you; the fact that God stoops to warn you, and that he will not send another gospel, or make another display of his love before you, excites no interest. We are ready to exclaim with the prophet, *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night* over the stupidity of sinners.

6. This carelessness is *induced;* it is not natural. When men first begin to violate their obligations, to depart from the living God, to live without prayer, to indulge in sin, conscience reproaches, their hearts smite them, sleep forsakes their eyes. A long process of hardening the heart is gone through with, before such a state of apathy is reached. Your indifference has all the *force of habit.* What saith the Scripture: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. A deceived heart turns the sinner aside, so that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* A state of indifference, induced by the habit of neglecting the gospel fo years, will not be easily broken up. Novelty, which is a powerful auxiliary to truth, is lost upon such. If the mighty works which Christ wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida, but which lost their effect by repetition, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, heathen cities, the first impression of such stupendous power had struck every mind—they *would have repented.* And if the same truths, which now leave careless sinners *here indifferent, were* delivered in the name of Christ to many sinners inhabiting the *waste places of Zion, they* would doubtless turn to the Lord.

This indifference, of which God complains, is voluntary. Go thy way, said

Felix to Paul, *when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.* He made his seriousness yield to his *convenience.* Who will say he was under a *necessity* to dismiss the apostle? *He* says no such thing. He might have taken a different course. And so might *you* have done, careless hearer; for you were not *always* as indifferent as you *now* are. When eternal things were pressed upon your regard, when the commandment came home to your heart, when the truth of God was felt, or a solemn providence filled you with seriousness, when you were agitating the question whether you should arise and go to your Father with the prodigal's confession upon your lips, who will say that an iron necessity bound you to the fatal course you took? What but a perverse will, an unbelieving heart, led you to dismiss your fears, to abandon your closet, to forsake the meeting for social prayer, to go back to the world? Ah! you *must* know that you acted deliberately; you *would not* come to Christ that you might have life; and now, if you die in your sins, if the Spirit of God never again awaken you, if you are left to sleep the sleep of spiritual and eternal death, it will be for ever true, that God called, and *you* refused; that he knocked at the door of your heart, and *you would not* open to him; that he stretched out his hands, and *you would not* regard him; that he sent his ministers to beseech you to be reconciled, and that you hated knowledge, and despised all his reproofs.

7. Another reason why you should be troubled is, *this carelessness is a state of mind that provokes God to withdraw his spirit.* This dead indifference springs from deep depravity; it is deeply *criminal.* If the heart were not deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, men would not be so insensible to divine things. In heaven there is no apathy; there ought to be none on earth. The truths of God possess sufficient interest and weight to excite every sensibility, to awaken every power. Must it not offend the Author of this record, to say that he has failed to reveal himself in a way to interest his creatures? They *can be* interested—a romance, a fictitious scene, a work of the imagination, can hold them waking till midnight, while the gospel is nodded over, or wholly neglected. Ah! the cause is to be sought, not in the inspired record, but in the *heart; it is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* Men reject Christ *because their deeds are evil;* and continuing to reject him, they are in danger of being given up to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. All habits gather strength by repetition. The man who sinned against his conscience the last Sabbath will be more likely to sin against it to-day. He who stifled conviction *then* is probably more disposed to do it *now.* In this way, God is provoked to leave them. His Spirit will not always strive with man. The sinner first sinks into indifference before he sinks into judicial sleep. O how many who were apparently not far from the kingdom of God relapse into stupidity, and never awake out of it. They have eyes, but they see not; their ears are dull of hearing, their hearts have waxed gross, so that they will not turn to the Lord. Wo unto you when God departs from you. This is no uncommon case. In ancient times, God said, *My people would not hearken to my voice; so I gave them up to their own heart's lusts.* He then spake by prophets. If unbelief under the Old Testament dispensation thus provoked him, how must he regard those who reject his Son? You shall hear. Says Jesus Christ, *O that they had known in this their day the things which belong to their peace; but now they are hidden from their eyes.* God spake to the heathen, says the apostle, so as to take away excuse even from them; but they refused to hear, and their punishment is thus described: *Because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them up to a reprobate mind.* And what will he do to those who turn away from him who speaks from heaven?

Let me say, in conclusion, *your indifference* will ultimately be broken up, and *will aggravate your condemnation a thousand fold.* The wrath of God is

revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men; and though the retribution sleep, it will come, and will not tarry. The measure of iniquity may be long filling up; but when it is full the judgment will be inflicted. The Jews were spared forty years after the Savior wept over their devoted city; and in the midst of his tears pronounced the irreversible sentence; but the cloud burst at length, and swept them away.

And, careless sinner, you may be continued,—the Sabbath may dawn upon you,—the voice of prayer may fall upon your ears, while you sleep securely in your sins; but the summons of death will come: *Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer steward.* You may reject the gospel, and despise its overtures, but *that* summons you cannot reject, *that* mandate you cannot despise. Then you will be indifferent no longer. Your dream of delusion will be dissipated; your vain thoughts will be expelled; your sweet hopes will perish like the spider's web. The awful realities of judgment and eternity will produce a conviction which will deepen for ever; the trial of the last day will correct your errors; the sentence of the Judge will destroy your self-complacency; the chains and darkness of the eternal prison will convince you, too late, that God is righteous when he judgeth.

O, to awake in the world of despair, and find, from the actual infliction of God's wrath, what an evil thing it is to sin against God; to know, by irreparable loss, the value of blessings despised, of blood trampled in the dust, of grace rejected! How will it imbitter the soul to dwell upon scenes once passed through on earth, during a short probationary season! The light that now shines, if it do not guide to heaven, will add deeper shades to the darkness of the pit. Recollection will be an endless source of misery to the lost. *Son*, said Jesus Christ to the rich man in torment, REMEMBER *that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.* What words can express the anguish of that soul thus reminded of lost opportunities, of slighted offers, of a Savior rejected, and a Spirit grieved? "O, had it not been for my foolish pride, my senseless avarice, I might now have been robed in purity, and seated at God's right hand: but I would not yield to the truth—I contended with God, and justly perish." Let these anticipated lamentations from the world of wo rouse you to a determined effort to throw off this lethargy that now settles upon you—call upon God—cast yourself at his feet—act for eternity with a more than mortal resolution—settle the point *to-day*, as you will wish you had done, at the judgment—you cannot be indifferent to religion long—there is but a step between you and death—O be indifferent no longer—if you wrap yourself in the delusion that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant—that time will be given you for repentance, though you now bury your talents and neglect the means of grace; in such an hour as you think not the avenger of blood may be upon you, and you may perish miserably for your presumption. Will you not, then, from *this moment* seek the Lord with your *whole heart?* Will you not call upon him while he is near? Will you run the desperate hazard of having all this work to perform on a dying bed? Defer the work, and your "dreadful end" may only furnish another warning to such as in health "forget God." But now give him your heart, and your life shall be peace, death a welcome messenger, and your eternity a scene of unmingled happiness and triumphant glory. AMEN.

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EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

1 John v. 10.—*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.*

There are many evidences to establish the truth of the Christian religion. We have the evidence of its first witnesses, who have declared unto us what they have seen and heard, and whose credibility is established by history. The supernatural occurrences, which have attended the establishment and propagation of our religion, are demonstrations of its truth and reality. The fact, that it has existed so long in the world, and survived every attempt to destroy it, is a strong evidence in its favor. Its intrinsic purity, and powerful efficacy exhibit another convincing testimony of its divine authority. All these considerations, with many more that might be mentioned, go to establish the truth of our holy religion.

But the best evidence which a man can have on this subject is his own experience. Of this evidence, the apostle speaks in the text, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." From this declaration of the inspired apostle, it

appears, that in his view there is something peculiar in the character and qualifications of a believer, in relation to this subject, which it is important for us to consider. Before we proceed any further, therefore, in this discussion, we shall endeavor to explain some of the distinguishing characteristics of the true believer.—What then is a believer?

A believer is one whose *understanding has been enlightened by the Word of God.* The Word of God is a light which shineth in a dark place, and although the darkness frequently comprehendeth it not, it has an enlightening influence on the minds of all who follow its direction. It is a powerful instrument, which the Holy Spirit uses, to produce deep and lasting impressions on the human understanding and heart. It was given by the inspiration of the Almighty, for our instruction in righteousness, and is able to make us wise unto salvation. And wherever the Word of God is faithfully preached, and diligently heard, it is made to produce these effects. It has a wonderful efficacy in leading men out of darkness, and bringing them to the light. This the believer has experienced. His understanding has been enlightened by the Word of God. It has produced an astonishing change in his mind. Once he was entirely ignorant of its truths, he refused either to read or hear it, because he was prejudiced against it, he was blind to its beautiful simplicity, and had no taste for its interesting descriptions. But since he has carefully read and seriously meditated upon it, all this ignorance and blindness has been removed, these prejudices have vanished from his mind, and he can now clearly see his folly and wickedness, in neglecting it so long. He has discovered many truths in the Bible, of which he was formerly entirely ignorant, or had a very imperfect idea. He has discovered that he is a sinner, who has broken God's law, and deserves its punishment. He has seen his danger and felt his guilt and misery under the dominion of sin, and the influence of an evil and corrupt nature. He has viewed himself as ex-

tremely odious in the sight of God. He has been taught to realize his hopeless and miserable condition under the curse of the law and the sentence of God's wrath. And having viewed himself as a guilty, condemned, and perishing sinner, he has cried to God for mercy. He has found also, that there is salvation for sinners—that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, has redeemed them by his blood, and that he is willing and able to save them to the uttermost—he has hearkened to the voice of the Son of God, and in accepting the offer of his salvation, he has learned from his own experience, that sinners who apply to this all-sufficient Savior, according to the terms and conditions of his gospel covenant, can be washed from all their uncleanness, pardoned of all their sins, and saved from all their guilt and misery. He is convinced that the plan of salvation which the gospel proposes, however mysterious and incomprehensible it may appear to many, who have never entered into it, is the most perfect system which Infinite Wisdom could have devised for the salvation of sinners and the glory of God.

These discoveries of divine truth have produced a most salutary effect on his mind—he has become deeply interested in the study of the Holy Scriptures—he loves the Word of God—he diligently reads, and earnestly prays, that he may understand it. Whenever he reads, he finds something new, and every new discovery renders him still more anxious to advance in religious knowledge and experience. He seeks to improve every opportunity of becoming more enlightened in the truths of God's holy word,—he faithfully attends the preaching of the gospel, he hears the word, and seriously and devoutly meditates upon what he hears. All his difficulties in the way of a regular attendance on the duties of the sanctuary are now removed—he diligently visits the house of God—participates in our devotional exercises, and listens to our discourses, that he may be instructed in righteousness and grow in grace. He who is thus enlightened by the

word of God, and sincerely desirous of profiting by the means of grace which he possesses, will continually advance in the way of salvation. He knows the truth, and the truth has made him free. A flood of spiritual light has entered his mind, and under the influence of this light he has come out of darkness, his eyes have been opened, he sees his past folly and wickedness, he has renounced his former errors, and embraced the truth: he now follows the light—he looks to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, to lead him in the way of eternal life, and having fixed his eye on the glorious prize of his high calling, he goes on rejoicing in his way, and glorifying God, who hath called him out of darkness into marvellous light.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the true believer *is, that he has experienced the renovating power of divine grace.* Grace communicates light, but light does not always communicate grace. There may be an abundance of *light* in a man's *mind*, and not a particle of *grace* in his heart. A man cannot be sanctified without being enlightened, but he may be enlightened without being sanctified. There are many who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Some men have learned to understand, and even to teach and preach the doctrines and principles of our holy religion, without giving any evidence that they have ever experienced their saving influence on their hearts. They study the Bible, as they would any uninspired book, for their literary gratification, and scientific improvement; they seek after wisdom—but it is the wisdom of the world—not that which cometh from above; they thirst for knowledge, but hunger not after righteousness—they want light, and love darkness rather than light.

But he that believeth on the Son of God has not only been enlightened by the word of God, he has also been sanctified by the power of divine grace. He has experienced that great moral change which is represented in the Scriptures as a new creation

—his whole soul is renovated—his flesh has been crucified—his body of sin destroyed: he has been buried with Christ—experienced the power of his resurrection, and now lives in the Spirit. His wicked heart has been changed, and his carnal mind renewed —he has been born again—he is a new creature—he has been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. And this is a great work. The sinner once was dead in trespasses and sins, but he has been raised from the dead, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus: his heart was desperately wicked, and his mind at enmity with God; but now the love of God hath been shed abroad in his heart. And this no human power could do. Reason could not do it; for in every attempt that has been made, it has been found inadequate to the task. All the light and knowledge which the world has ever possessed could not do it; for whenever and wherever they have been applied, they have failed. No, nothing short of the power of Almighty God will change the sinner's heart.

And this the believer has experienced. He has received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and under his quickening influence he was made spiritually alive. The Holy Spirit has entered into his heart, and filled it with the love of God, and all those Christian graces which adorn his character and afford him so much comfort and enjoyment. Under the power and influence of divine grace, he was made free from sin, released from the captivity of Satan, restored to the favor of God, and fitted for the happiness of heaven. Sustained by this power and influence, he daily increases in the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ: he holds on his way, and advances in his course, until he has arrived at the mark, and can say with the distinguished apostle of old, "I have fought the good fight—I have finished my course—I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day."

The last distinguishing characteristic of the true believer, which we shall mention, is, *that he feareth God, and worketh righteousness.* There are many people who say that they love the Lord Jesus Christ. We have their *word* for it, and that is all: they have professed religion, and made a declaration of their faith, and this is all they have ever done. And what is yet worse, it is all that they think *necessary* to be done, in order to be saved. Such people are deceived by a false profession. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him—they say that they believe in the Son of God, and abide in him, but they walk not even as he walked—they are engaged in wicked pursuits, they have no fear of God before their eyes, neither do they love righteousness—they have placed all their affections upon the world, they live in the flesh, and notwithstanding all their professions of love and friendship, they are the enemies of God, and daily transgress his holy will and commandments. This did not Christ—and no true believer in him will do it. He is one who feareth God and worketh righteousness. True Christian faith is an operative principle. It cannot be hid. No man lighteth a candle, and putteth it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, so that it giveth light to all that are in the house. So it is with the true believer; his light shineth before men, so that they may see his good works. Here is the great test of all true religion. A man may seem religious, but if he is a worldly-minded man, if he is covetous, if he has no feeling for the poor, despiseth his brother, and bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain: he may say that he has faith, but if he has never proved his faith by his works, will his faith save him? He may boast of his knowledge, and talk much of his experience; if he is not distinguished by an honest and upright walk, he has no religion. The man who will deny himself, take up his cross and follow Christ wherever he leads him, who is willing to serve God faithfully, and do his work diligently, in whatever station he may be commanded to labor—he it is whom the Lord will own for his good and faithful ser-

vant. The man who adorns his profession with a holy walk and conversation, and leads a life of exemplary piety, who labors perseveringly and prays unceasingly for the salvation of souls and the glory of God, he alone deserves to be called a Christian. The man who lays aside every weight and the sins that so easily beset him, and runs with patience the race that is set before him, looking unto Jesus, following his example, walking as he walked, and persevering to the end—he it is whom Christ will acknowledge in the presence of God, before angels and men, as his true disciple.

How honorable then is the condition of the believer—how distinguished in character and qualifications. He is enlightened by the word of God; he has experienced the renovating power of divine grace; he feareth God, and worketh righteousness.

Now this man has a witness in himself. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." What witness is this? It is the Holy Spirit—He testifies in the hearts of believers: and what does this witness prove? To what does the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer testify? He testifies, in the first place, to the *salvation of the believer*. People often have an idea that they will be saved, when they must be condemned. There are many living under the light of the gospel who walk in darkness: they have never repented of their sins, neither do they believe on the only-begotten Son of God. Such people, whatever they may think of themselves, are condemned already; for this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Now, when we come to converse with such people on their religious state, they are generally ready to admit that they are sinners, that they have lived careless lives, and know very little about religion. But when we represent to them the consequences of their wickedness; when we tell them, that

in this impenitent state they must be lost—they hope to be saved: but it is a false hope. It is a hope suggested by the deceitfulness of their own hearts. It is a hope created by the artifice of the devil, to keep them in his snare. It has no foundation in the gospel; and if their eyes are ever opened by the Holy Spirit, they will find it to be so: they will then see that they have been deceiving themselves, under the cover of a false religion; that they have sought their refuge under vanity and lies, instead of being shielded by the truth.

No man can hope to be saved, as long as he continues to live in an impenitent state. There are certain duties to be performed, before we can enter into the kingdom of God and assume to ourselves the promises of the gospel. God has promised salvation upon certain terms and conditions. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." These are the terms upon which God hath promised to save the sinner; and the sinner must comply with these terms before he can hope to be saved. This the believer has done: he knows that he has repented of his sins, and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore he knows that he shall be saved. Job had this testimony. He was a true believer; and he did not say, "I hope to be saved," after the manner of many careless and ignorant people, who have never examined into their hopes. No: he was convinced from experience, and could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth—I know that when worms have destroyed my body, in my flesh shall I see God." St. John says, "We know that we have passed from death to life, and that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and see him as he is." And St. Paul says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him, until that day."

And this is the experience of every true believer. He knows

by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that he is a child of God, and an heir of eternal life. He knows that he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and keeps his commandments. He knows that he has performed the conditions upon which God has promised to save his soul, and that God will perform his promise. If a sinner has ever been truly converted to God, he must *know* it. I do not say that he must know precisely the *time* when, and the *spot* where he first experienced religion. That is not necessary; it is not required in the word of God, that we should be able to give to each other a minute description of all the circumstances of our religious experience. It is often impossible for the best Christians to tell when or where they received the first religious impressions, in what manner they were produced, or how the work was accomplished in their hearts. But they *know* that they love God; and this is all that is necessary for them to know, in order to convince them that they have experienced religion. This is all that God has ever required in his word; for love is the fulfilling of the law. This love testifies in the heart of the believer. This is his witness. This proves the reality of his religion; this convinces him that he is a child of God, and consequently an heir of salvation; for "every one that loveth is born of God."

The Holy Spirit, in the heart of the believer, testifies, in the second place, *to the truth of what God has declared in his word.*

Some people seem to be gifted with a strange, wonder-working spirit, of which we have no account in the word of God. Under the influence of this spirit, they appear to be favored with new revelations. They make many wonderful discoveries in dreams. They are often rapt in heavenly visions, and have views of the celestial regions, where they see and hear many marvellous things which have never been seen or heard before. From these wonderful discoveries they derive many comfortable feelings—their hearts are filled with emotions of love and joy, which they cannot express; and while they are feasting on these holy

transports, they lose their taste for the word of God; and if we urge it upon them, we are accused of quenching the Spirit, and throwing stumbling-blocks in their way. Now there can be no doubt that these people are moved by the *spirit;* but it is not the Spirit of God. It is the spirit of delusion; and this spirit leads them into all this folly and extravagance. The Spirit of God leadeth no man into error. He is a faithful witness in the heart of the believer, which testifies to the truth of what God has *declared* in his *word.* God has declared in his word that we are all sinners; that we are by nature the children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins, under the curse of the law; and that if God had left us in this state, we must all have perished together. Of this truth the believer has the witness in himself. He knows from his own experience that he is a poor and miserable sinner, who has been convicted by the law, who is condemned by his own heart, and deserves the punishment of God's everlasting wrath and indignation. God hath declared in his word, that Jesus Christ hath come into the world to save sinners—that he has rendered an atonement for their sins, satisfied the requirements of the law, released them from its condemnation; and freely offers salvation to all who are willing to embrace it, upon the terms and conditions of his gospel covenant. This is confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. He knows, from his own experience, that Jesus Christ *is* the Savior of sinners; for he was washed by his blood, justified in his name, and sanctified by his Spirit. God has declared in his word, that in the flesh we cannot please him; that in our natural and unregenerate state, we are not subject to his law; and that, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Of this the believer is convinced by the testimony of the Witness in his heart. He knows, from his experience, that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing. He is sensible, that while he lived in the flesh, he was sold under sin; that his carnal heart was at enmity with God, not subject to his law; and that the law of the

Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made him free from the law of sin and death.

God hath declared in his word, that we must be saved by grace, and not by works. This doctrine is also fully established by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. He is convinced by his own experience, that he possesses no righteousness of his own; that he cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, and that he is left wholly dependent upon the grace of God for salvation. And in this way I might go on, and show how every doctrine which God has revealed in his word, is established and confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

This is *every* true believer's experience: he knows that the Bible is true, not merely because it is the inspired word of God, but because he has *felt* the power and influence of those truths which God has revealed in it. A man who is thus settled and grounded in the truth is not easily moved away. The doctrines which he has embraced rest upon no slight foundation. They were revealed to him from heaven, they are confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and established by his experience. He knows that they are from God, and will faithfully cherish, and firmly adhere to them. You may say that he is deceived, and try to convince him that he is wrong; but you cannot make him believe it. You may call him an enthusiast; you may say that he is prejudiced, and will not listen to reason; that he blindly adheres to his own opinion, and cannot be influenced by any considerations to abandon it; but he *knows* that he adheres to the truth and will not forsake it. You may reason with him on the subject of religion: you may endeavor to persuade him that he has a wrong view of it, that it does not require those severe mortifications of the flesh which he supposes; that it is not necessary for us to forsake the world, deny ourselves, and

take up the cross, in order to follow Christ; that we can serve God without rendering such heavy sacrifices; and that if we are only honest and upright in our conduct towards men, and possess a character which the world calls good, we shall be justified in the sight of God, and accepted of him. You may endeavor to convince the true believer that this is all the religion that is necessary; he knows that your reasoning is false, that there is not one word of truth in what you say. He understands his religion: he knows in what it consists, and you need not teach him its nature and requirements. He has taken it from the Bible, he has received it from the Holy Spirit, and he understands it *too well* to be deceived in this way. You may reason with him out of the Scriptures, you may prove to him that God is merciful and good, that he has created all men for happiness, and is not willing that any sinner should die; that he is able to accomplish his will, and that, consequently, all men must be saved: but he is too well acquainted with his Bible to be imposed upon by this vain and superficial reasoning, which is calculated to influence *weak heads* and *wicked hearts*. You may endeavor to persuade him that he has a wrong idea of himself, that he is not that poor and miserable sinner that he represents himself to be, that he is a good man who deserves to be rewarded for his virtues, that he possesses an enlightened mind, and that his own judgment will direct him in the right way; that he need not fear to enter into temptation, that he knows enough to take care of himself, and that it is not necessary for him constantly to watch and pray. In this way you may endeavor to raise his vanity and excite his pride, but you cannot succeed in the attempt, you cannot persuade him that he is no sinner; he knows that he *is* a sinner, he *feels* it; and what he *wants*, in this world of dangers, and difficulties, and trials, and temptations, is *God's help*: not proof that *he can take care of himself*. Suppose you undertake to prove to such a man, that he was never under the influence of an evil nature, that he might have served God in

the flesh, and that it was not necessary for him to be born of the Spirit,—what would he say? "I know that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing; I know that I was once carnal, and sold under sin: except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; for what is born of the flesh is flesh: I know this to be a fact from my own experience, and you cannot make me believe otherwise." This is the answer he would make, and here would be an end to the controversy, because you cannot reason a man out of his own experience. When he appeals to the evidence of his own *consciousness*, when he tells you of things which he has *seen*, and *heard*, and *felt*, you must admit their reality. If you try to convince such a man that there is no eternal punishment, that it would be unjust to punish sinners throughout eternity, for sins which they committed in time; he will prove to you from the Bible that this is perfectly just and right; he will show you that sin is an *infinite evil*, and that it consequently deserves an *infinite punishment*, and that God is just in casting from his presence, *for ever*, those workers of iniquity who will *never cease* to do evil. If you undertake to prove to the true believer, that wicked absurdity, that Jesus Christ was a created Savior, he will tell you that he can find no such thing in his Bible; but that, on the contrary, the Bible teaches him that the Word was God, and was so from the beginning; that by him all things were made; and that when God commanded all the angels of heaven to worship his First-Begotten, he did not mean that they should commit the sin of *idolatry*, and worship a *created object*. He will refer you to his experience, and the experience of all truly converted men. They were never *saved* by a *created Savior*,—they were never rescued from the powers of death and hell by an arm of flesh. Their load of condemnation, guilt, and misery, was never removed from them by a created power. No, it was the eternal Jehovah, the Lord their righteousness, God manifest in the flesh, who performed all this; and He it is who hath sent down his Spirit from on high, to strengthen and support them by

his almighty power. And by the gracious influence of this almighty power, the true believer is constantly sustained. This helpeth his infirmities; this is his strong fortress, in which he repels all the attacks of the enemies of his salvation; this is his shield and buckler, with which he encounters the fiery darts of the wicked one; this is his comforter in all his troubles and afflictions. "His cross is heavy, but he has not far to carry it." He rejoices in the hope of the glory of God; and this hope, like an anchor of the soul, is sure and steadfast. He knows in whom he has believed: his trust is in the Lord, and he will never leave nor forsake him. The Holy Spirit is with him, and God gives him many glorious manifestations of his gracious presence. The purposes of his pilgrimage shall soon be accomplished, when all his earthly trials and sufferings shall end. His heart is already cheered with the prospect of a speedy deliverance. He already anticipates the glory that shall be revealed in him, and enjoys a foretaste of heavenly bliss. Still, it doth not yet appear what he shall be; but he knows that when Jesus Christ shall appear, he shall be like him, and see him as he is, in all the fulness of his joy and the brightness of his glory.

This is *experimental religion*. And this is the *only* religion that can *save* us. Here let us not be deceived. We may have great pretensions to piety, and *talk much* on the subject of religion, when *we know but little* about it. We may attend to the outward forms and duties of the Christian profession, and think that this is all the religion that is required: but God *thinks* otherwise; he never will be satisfied with forms and ceremonies, professions and promises, which have no intrinsic value, and are but too often used as the false coverings of corrupt principles and wicked intentions. He requires something more *substantial*,—"*My son, give me thy heart.*" It is the heart, and the *whole* heart that God requires; and he will accept nothing *less*. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This is the sacrifice which we

are commanded to render, and this is the only offering which God will accept, because he knows that nothing else can test our sincerity.

The time will come when this test must be applied to us all. We may now view religion as a subject of no great importance; and while we are thus making light of it, satisfy ourselves with vain hopes and groundless expectations: but we shall soon view it in a far different light. When we come to die, many of us shall *think* and *feel* on this subject very differently from what we now do. In that trying hour it will not be sufficient for us to say, "I am willing to die, and I hope that God may have mercy on my soul."—We shall then want something which will enable us to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; I am not afraid to die; O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!—thanks be to God, who hath given me the victory." And there is only one thing that can enable us to say so—*experimental religion:* this is the religion that we shall *want*, when we come *to die.* If, therefore, we would not be left comfortless in that trying hour, let us now give our hearts to God. If we would *die* like Christians, let us *live* like Christians. Let us live truly devoted to God, and we shall *know* that we are his children. In life, he will cherish and preserve us; in death, he will not forsake us; and when we pass through the dark valley, we shall fear no evil, for his rod and staff shall comfort us. Thus "the righteous hath hope in his death." And,

> . . . . . "the dread path once trod,
> Heaven lifts its everlasting portals high,
> And bids the pure in heart behold their God."

THE BELIEVER'S TRIUMPH.

"The good man's hope is laid far, far beyond
The sway of tempests, or the furious sweep
Of mortal desolation.—He beholds,
Unapprehensive, the gigantic stride
Of rampant Ruin, or the unstable waves
Of dark Vicissitude.—Even in death,
In that dread hour, when with a giant pang,
Tearing the tender fibres of the heart,
The immortal spirit struggles to be free,
Then, even then, that hope forsakes him not,
For it exists beyond the narrow verge
Of the cold sepulchre.—The petty joys
Of fleeting life indignantly it spurn'd,
And rested on the bosom of its God.
This is man's only reasonable hope;
And 'tis a hope which, cherish'd in the breast,
Shall not be disappointed.—Even he,
The Holy One—Almighty—who elanced
The rolling world along its airy way,
Even He will deign to smile upon the good,
And welcome him to those celestial seats,
Where joy and gladness hold their changeless reign"

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SERMON CXLI.

By Rev. GEORGE E. PIERCE,

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THE TEARS OF JESUS.

Luke xix. 41, 42.—*And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

These words of Christ were spoken under circumstances of peculiar interest. He and his followers were approaching Jerusalem, where he was soon to be betrayed and crucified. He had come to the brow of Olivet, whence the city was seen in near prospect. A view of the holy city, its lofty walls, its splendid palaces, and its sacred temple towering above the rest, in rich magnificence,—the central seat of God's chosen people,—was surely fitted to awaken pleasing emotions. Nevertheless, sadness filled the heart of Jesus.

He was now, more than at any former period, the object of popular favor. He, who had long been despised and rejected of men, was now, in accordance with ancient prophecy, entering Jerusalem in seeming triumph. The people, astonished at his miracles, were acknowledging him their king, and bestowing upon him the tokens of honor customarily shown on the approach of kings and conquerors. As he rode on his way, descending the Mount of Olives, a "very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes, that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Yet in the midst of this joyful multitude, he who was the object of their homage remained sad.

He foresaw the events that awaited him at Jerusalem, and knew that the hour was at hand when he should depart out of the world. He had distinct apprehension of the trying circumstances of his arrest and condemnation, and of the

sufferings in which his life would terminate. Yet these were not the things which bore with most weight upon his mind. Passing by all things else, his sorrow is awakened, in view of Jewish impenitence and unbelief. And when he came near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. As a preacher of the gospel of peace, he had labored in Jerusalem with comparatively little success. Though his approach to the city was hailed with hosannas, his gospel had not been received. They who had killed the prophets, and stoned those who were sent unto them, were now filling up the measure of their iniquity by rejecting the true Messiah. The language of his grief is expressive of strong desire, on the eve of despondency. O, that thou hadst known, even thou, highly-favored people, at least in this thy day, when the Messiah has come, publishing glad tidings, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

Christ, uniting a human nature with the divine, can weep over the wickedness and obduracy of impenitent men, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and does earnestly desire that ruined sinners may be partakers in the benefits of his redemption.

The leading sentiment suggested by the text is, that CHRIST EARNESTLY DESIRES THE CONVERSION OF THE IMPENITENT. It is not strange that it should be so, since,

I. He knows *what sin is, and what are its consequences.* He weeps over men, as offenders against God, and desires their release from sin and condemnation. Knowing the extent and danger of the disease, he is anxious to apply the remedy.

The ideas men have of sin and its evils are altogether inadequate. They rarely give the subject a careful consideration. The contemplation of it brings upon them painful convictions of guilt. To look at their relations to God, and their obligations to love him, and recall the delinquencies of their past lives, would disturb their peace and mar their enjoyment. They wish to think well of themselves, and they palliate their guilt; and by a thousand devices, cover their sins. They hate the light, neither come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. And though convicted of sin, their conceptions of it are still inadequate. When the truth is urged home upon the heart and the conscience, and applied by the convicting influences of the Spirit, when the character of God as holy is seen, and the extent and purity of his law are apprehended, and the heart with its desperate wickedness is recovered, still but little is known of sin, of its actions, nature, and mischievous tendency.

But the character of sin, and all its bearings upon the happiness of man and the government of God, are fully comprehended by the mind of Jesus. He has understood from the beginning what were the principles of his Father's administration. He knows what are the great ends of his government, and by what means they are accomplished. He knows the laws by which his Father governs, their purity and extent, and how unspeakably important it is, that justice and judgment continue the habitation of his throne. And he understands, full well, what sin is, as aimed against the government of God, and a transgression of holy law. He has seen its influence, wherever it has spread through his Father's dominions. He was present and saw the sad effects of sin, when a part of the angelic hosts rebelled, and there was war in heaven. He saw its influence in changing them from angels of light to malignant fiends, and casting them out of heaven, and consigning them to the darkness of the pit, reserved in

everlasting chains, unto the judgment of the great day. It was he that created the world, and made it a suitable habitation for man—for man, obedient, sinless, and immortal. And he saw the sad effects of sin, when the tempter entered the peaceful bowers of Eden, and when the forbidden fruit was taken. He has watched the effects of sin, in its wide-spreading influence among mankind, in all succeeding ages. And it was their sad condition, as under its reigning power, that moved his pity, and urged him to undertake for their recovery, by making his soul an offering for sin. And while he was on the earth and fulfilling the ends of his mission, though he knew no sin as a transgressor, yet he had opportunity of tasting its bitter ingredients. "Himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and the anguish of spirit which he endured, when on him was laid the iniquity of us all, and when denied the light of his Father's countenance, he bowed his head in death, plainly told him what sin must be, which could be only thus atoned for. Nor is it strange, that the benevolent Jesus, remembering the agonies of his cross when he sunk under the painful load of our iniquity, should desire our deliverance.

He is well acquainted with the effects of sin, as resulting from continued impenitence. He knows what must be the sinner's course, and what his fearful end, if, resisting proffered mercy, he goes on hardening himself in unbelief. He can foresee the sorrows and woes that will cluster around him, leading a sinful life, and dying a hopeless death. He knows what it will be for a sinner to appear at his judgment-bar, unwashed in his blood and without the robes of his righteousness, only to be banished from his presence to the world of despair. And the mind of Jesus is capable of comprehending the extent and severity of the woes to be endured in that eternal world.

The capacities of men are limited, and never do their powers appear so feeble and imperfect as when they look into futurity, and attempt to measure and estimate the unseen things of eternity. With all the light of revelation, we form but feeble conceptions of what awaits us beyond the grave. We can know something of the happiness of the righteous. We can know something of the miseries of the lost. The Scriptures have exhibited, by the most terrific images, the punishment of the ungodly. But no man will know, in this life, what it is to be banished from the presence of God, and imprisoned with damned spirits, to blaspheme God, and feel the gnawings of the worm that never dies. No man, till he shall sink beneath the burning lake, will understand what is intended by the vengeance of eternal fire, nor even then will he be able to anticipate the amount of suffering, of coming ages, while the *eternal* smoke of his torment is ascending.

But Jesus, who takes a deep interest in all the affairs of his Father's government, and casts a penetrating glance through his wide-spreading dominions, has seen the eternal prison-house, and knows what punishments are there inflicted. From his lofty throne in the heavens he can look across the impassable gulf, and view the sufferings of the rich man, in his place of torment, calling in vain for a drop of water to cool his tongue. And he can cast his mind forward, through the coming ages of eternity, and measure the amount of suffering yet to be endured. And with his enlarged views of the fearful end of the wicked, we cannot wonder that he should take a deep interest in the condition of man on probation, and weep over his impenitence and folly,—saying, O, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!

II. Christ earnestly desires the conversion of the impenitent, because he knows *what ample provision has been made for their pardon.* He looks upon men, not only as sinners, but as redeemed sinners; and considering the price that was paid for their ransom, he earnestly desires that they may partake of its benefits. The way of salvation by Jesus Christ has always been an inviting, animating theme. It was a subject of much thought and interest to mankind, during the ages which preceded the Messiah's coming. Many prophets and wise men, looking at types and sacrifices, and anticipating a more full development of the things pertaining to salvation, when the fulness of time should come, earnestly desired to see the days of Christ's appearing. The contemplation of this theme, as more fully displayed in the life and doctrines of Christ, animated the apostles in the arduous enterprise of preaching the gospel. The subject has excited even a greater interest among the hosts of heaven. These are the things which angels desire to look into, and the loftiest hymns of praise of those who surround the throne of God are awakened by redeeming love. But to no one is redemption a subject of more interest than to the Redeemer himself.

We take deepest interest in plans that are our own, and which are accomplished by our own efforts. The salvation of a ruined world is to Christ a plan of his own, and one which has for a long time called forth his labors and awakened the full energy of his love. In the redemption of fallen men he has been the chief actor, and has watched its progress through every stage of its accomplishment, and he is capable of comprehending the real magnitude of the vast design.

When we, with our limited capacities, fix our attention upon the system of redeeming mercy, there is comparatively little we can understand. And should we ever arrive in heaven, it will be the pleasing theme of investigation for eternity. But Jesus knows what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth of that love which passeth knowledge. He was present and took part in the counsels, when it was decided in heaven that man should be redeemed, and that the Son, giving his soul an offering for sin, should have a chosen people to serve him, as his reward. He made all the arrangements of that darker dispensation by which the expectations of men were raised, and the way prepared for his appearance on the earth. He saw how great the condescension, for him who was rich, yet for our sakes to become poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. He knows how much suffering and self-denial it cost him, while, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he fulfilled the business of his mission. He remembers what was the anguish of that hour, when in the near prospect of death, his soul was troubled and he seemed to hesitate whether he should pray, Father, save me from this hour, or Father, glorify thy name. He knows what were the agonies of his cross, when he poured out his blood an offering for sin, and the scene veiled the heavens in sackcloth, and shook the earth, and raised the dead. Considering these sufferings, he would earnestly desire that they might avail to secure the sinner's pardon and cleansing. He knows that the provisions are ample, and that justice cannot overtake those who fly to him for refuge. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and the poor polluted sinner may fly to the fountain, and secure its benefits. The invitations have gone out, and whosoever will may come, and Jesus, who died for the sinner, desires that he should not tarry. O, the hardness and obduracy of the impenitent heart, that is not softened and subdued by redeeming love! Seeing the reluctance of

redeemed sinners to come to Christ, what friend of God but could mingle his tears with those of Jesus, and say, O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!

III. Christ desires *the enlargement of his kingdom.* Of course he desires that sinners may be converted, and added to the number of its loyal subjects. When the Messiah was about to appear, the event was announced by John, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Christ came into the world to establish a kingdom, and he has ever taken a deep interest in its establishment and progress. With constant solicitude he watched over its interests when it was small, and labored and prayed for its enlargement. He came to God's chosen people, who had long enjoyed his word and ordinances, and preached the gospel of the kingdom in the cities and villages of Judea. He chose to lay the foundations of the kingdom on the labors of prophets, and gather its early subjects from the seed of Abraham. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and he spared no effort to gather them to his fold. And when he saw the multitude of those that believed not, he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts.

He carefully instructed the few who became his followers in the great principles of the kingdom, and prepared them to become his agents in extending its borders. And when he left them, he commanded them to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations, and promised to be with them, even to the end of the world. Through all the fiery trials of the church, he has watched over her interests and prospered her, to her present state of enlargement. The kingdom is still to advance, and he looks forward to its future triumphs, and anticipates the day when he shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

The views of men concerning this kingdom have always been gross and imperfect. From the language of prophecy respecting the Prince that was to appear, and the deliverance that was to be wrought by him, it was inferred, that his kingdom was like the kingdoms of the earth, and that he was to ascend the throne at Jerusalem, and become a conqueror and a deliverer from Roman bondage. And it was with difficulty, that he enlightened even his followers into the nature of that spiritual dominion, which it was his object to establish over the hearts and lives of men. And in all ages, when men have been called to act with reference to this kingdom, they have shown that their views were earthly, that their desires were to give the kingdom an earthly character, and that they were slow in coming to a practical knowledge of its spirituality. And now, that the kingdom has spread itself so widely on the face of the earth, and its interests have become so various and complicated, the feeble minds of men fail to embrace these interests in all their bearings, and their hearts are not moved as they might be moved by a more enlarged and perfect knowledge. And especially are their conceptions imperfect, when they turn to the future and contemplate the spreading influence of the gospel in Christian and pagan lands, till the Sun of righteousness shall compass the earth, the Millennium be ushered in, and Jesus reign in triumph over all nations. We cannot say what bearing the events which come under our own observation are to have upon these great interests. We cannot say what will result from the combined effort of the people of God to give the Bible and spread the gospel, from the extensive outpouring of the Spirit, or from the conversion even of a single sinner.

But Jesus, seated on his throne in the heavens, distinctly surveys and fully

comprehends all the interests of his kingdom, as it spreads before him in this lower world. With spiritual discernment, he knows in what hearts his reign has commenced, and to what extent the borders of the kingdom have been enlarged. He perceives to what extent his followers have obeyed his command to evangelize the nations, and what progress is now making in the recovery of the world from Satan's empire, and what prospect there is that the millennial triumph will soon be achieved. He observes the spirit of the various hosts of his armies as they advance, and marks their victories; and he knows what bearing every event will have on Zion's prosperity. He knows what obstacles are to be encountered in urging on the extension of his kingdom, what forces are required in securing its advancement, and what use he can make of sinners converted and sanctified, in filling up the ranks of his armies, and making them the instruments of glorious achievements. Every converted man becomes a soldier of the cross, or herald of salvation, and according to the talents and opportunities given him, is to be employed in extending the influence of the gospel. It must be then, that Jesus, with his views of the greatness and importance of the kingdom, and his benevolent regard for its interests, desires the conversion of sinners, that they may become subject to his reign, and that they may be workers together with him in extending his kingdom through the earth.

And when his converts, in obedience to his commission, preach his gospel to impenitent men, and they hesitate concerning a compliance with the proffered mercy or a rejection of it, he knows what will be the results of their decision. He can trace all the minute bearings which the conversion even of one soul will have upon the interests which lie so near his heart. Perhaps the sinner, on whom the Savior's heart fixes with yearning anxiety, is a parent, and were he sanctified, might teach his tender offspring to know the Lord and train them up for Christ; and ordering his household after him, his children and his children's children, to the latest generation, might be found walking in the truth. Perhaps he is a teacher of youth, and his labors and pious influence are needed in the extensive system of Sabbath instruction, by which the church is endeavoring to train all her children to a saving acquaintance with the word of God. Perhaps he has talents, and property, and influence, and is wanted, in the place of the fathers who continue not, to sustain the interests of the church and prosecute plans of benevolent enterprise. Perhaps he is young, and gifted, and ardent, and, if sanctified, might become a champion of the cross amid the wide-spreading desolations of his own country; or a missionary to bear glad tidings to the heathen, and pour the light of heaven on their darkness. With these views, Jesus, looking down upon the impenitent hearers of his gospel, desires their conversion, and no wonder if he should weep that they are so slow of heart to believe.

But his views are not limited to the spread of the gospel, and the extension of his kingdom on the earth. His mediatorial work has reference to the more enlarged, and perfect, and permanent establishment of his kingdom in that renovated state of things which shall exist when the heavens and the earth, which now are, shall be no more. He looks forward to the period when the gospel shall have been preached to all nations, and the last of his redeemed ones shall have been gathered in, and the earth, the scene of probation, shall have passed away, and all the ransomed of the Lord shall be assembled around his throne in the heavens, and with angelic hosts, constitute an everlasting kingdom. And *he desires* the conversion of sinners, that they may belong to the happy numbers

who shall meet on the heavenly hill, and bring honor to the Lamb that was slain, and ascribe salvation to his blood.

In this world, we have but little knowledge of heaven. We catch but faint glimpses of the glories of Him who occupies the eternal throne, and the happiness of those who bow before him. But Jesus has full conceptions of the glories and the joys of the eternal state, and he desires the conversion of sinners, that they may enhance those glories and share in those joys. He desires their conversion, that they may come to the grave in peace, and look forward upon the untried scenes of eternity undismayed. He desires their conversion, that when, amid attending angels, he shall ascend the throne of judgment, they may stand before him washed in his blood and clad in the robes of his righteousness, and worthy to share in the inheritance prepared by his love. He desires their conversion, that, when he shall have fulfilled the transactions of the great day, and shall leave the judgment-seat to conduct his redeemed ones up to take possession of the New Jerusalem, they may swell the triumph of his train, and sing, Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. He is now gathering from among the sinful children of men the subjects of that kingdom whose central city has gates of pearl and streets of gold, where flows the river of life clear as crystal, and where the glory of the Lord is so resplendent, that they have no need of the sun or the moon. And he desires the conversion of sinners, that they may belong to that innumerable company whom no man can number, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, who cast their crowns at his feet, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

The view we have thus given of Christ may instruct his *followers*. You see, Christian friends, what are the feelings of your Master towards a world lying in wickedness. You see with what emotions he regards the multitude of those who enjoy the means of grace, hear the preaching of the gospel, and receive the influence of the Spirit, and yet remain in impenitence and unbelief. And I would take the example of your Lord to awaken in your minds feelings of deep interest in their behalf. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Taking a deep interest in those things on which the Savior's heart is fixed, and laboring to fulfil his desires, you evince your discipleship, you show yourselves the true subjects of the kingdom, and worthy to be partakers in the joys and honors of its eternal state.

Follow your Lord through the walks of Judea, and see with what affectionate earnestness he publishes the gospel of peace. How laborious and persevering, how regardless of dangers, how unwilling to abandon the sinner to his chosen way. See him on the Mount of Olives, and witness his tears, as he looks upon Jerusalem, and weeps over those who had killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent unto them, and were now filling up the measure of their iniquity. Remember what he has done and suffered to prepare for himself a redeemed people, and what are the longings of his mind that lost sinners may share in the benefits of his redemption: and ask yourselves, how he expects you, who have been redeemed by his blood and sanctified by his Spirit, will feel and act in the circumstances in which he has placed you. How does he expect you to feel and act, in reference to those of your acquaintance and kindred who assemble

with you in the house of prayer, and hear the preaching of his gospel, and feel the strivings of his Spirit, and yield not to their influence? As you look around on your friends and kindred, and fix an eye upon your beloved offspring, yet unsanctified, and remember the opportunities they have enjoyed, and the grace they have resisted, while your tears fall, and your prayers ascend in their behalf, is it not the language of your grief, O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace?

Will you not aspire to follow after the example of your Lord, in taking a wider view of the interests of his kingdom? and with hearts affected with the desolations which sin has spread abroad on the earth, and with lively apprehensions of the abundance of that grace by which the souls of men are redeemed, and the richness of their inheritance, if they make that grace their refuge, will you not gird yourselves anew in gospel armor, and urge on the conquering car of your Redeemer?

I have one *motive*, by which to urge the *impenitent* to give their hearts to God. Jesus Christ desires it. I see before me sinners, hardened under the influence of the gospel, those who though guilty have been bought with blood, and have heard the proclamations of pardon, and have felt the strivings of the Spirit. And while, my friends, I could weep over your condition, I would hope that the things of your peace are not already hid from your eyes. And knowing what are the feelings of my Lord, whose commission I bear, I am constrained to make one more effort to persuade you to repent. Though guilty, condemned, and in danger of eternal death, there is a refuge in the arms of Jesus, and by repentance and faith you secure pardon, and life, and blessedness. And I would persuade you to repent, for Christ desires it. I present before you the bleeding Lamb of God, weeping over the sins and follies of men, being grieved that they are so reluctant to come to him for cleansing.

I might use other arguments. I might tell you of the command of God, and urge you by the authority of him who reigns in heaven. I might tell you of the joys which flow when sin is pardoned, and the sweet peace of conscience secured by the humble penitent in the day of his conversion. I might tell you of the blessedness of living under the approving smile of Heaven, and having God for your friend in the hour of death, and of the happiness of that world where no sorrow comes. I might bring before you friends and parents and dearest kindred, and cause you to hear their prayers and see their tears, and tell you of the floods of joy with which they would greet you as a child of God. I might refer you to the desires of angels, who hover around you while you hear the truth, anxious to bear to the court of heaven the joyful tidings which swell the eternal anthem over a returning penitent. But I pass by these considerations, often urged—I pass them all by, and point you to the tears of Jesus. He who had compassion on you, and shed his blood to redeem you, wept over those in your condition. O let him gratify the feelings of his benevolent heart in your salvation.

You know but little of sin and its consequences. But he who knows the length and breadth of the evil, who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, proposes your deliverance. You know little of the riches of his grace. But he who paid the ransom proposes to wash you in his blood. You know little of the future glories of the kingdom. But he who fills its throne and conducts its interests proposes that you become an instrument of his glory, and live and reign with him for ever and ever. Will you withhold your confidence and refuse

your consent to his gracious purposes? Will you refuse to let him bless you? If Jesus were to come down again from his heavenly throne, and have his dwelling with men, may we not suppose that he would labor and preach, and pray and weep, as he did in the walks of Judea and the streets of Jerusalem? May we not suppose, that, coming into the assemblies of those who hear the gospel, he would repeat the history of his dying love, and show them the wounds in his hands and in his side, and in his infinite tenderness urge his proffered grace. And when he should see their unbelief, would he not, with a heart ready to break, lament over them and say, How shall I give thee up? O that thou hadst known—at least in this thy day—when probation is enjoyed, and the truth is proclaimed, and the Spirit is urging—O that thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace! And remember, impenitent hearers, the day may come, when it shall be added, But now they are hid from thine eyes! You may be abandoned, as were the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to walk in your own ways and receive the fruit of your own devices. And it may be said to you, When I called ye refused—Behold your house is left unto you desolate. The compassionate Jesus will shortly be the enthroned Judge, and you may be compelled to hear from his lips, "*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*" O that you were wise, that you understood these things, that you would consider your latter end!

SERMON CXLII.

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PRACTICAL EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

Divers opinions are entertained respecting this passage. Some maintain that the persons here described are doubtless true Christians, and that the paragraph plainly proves that such not only *may*, but sometimes actually *do*, fall from grace, and become altogether impenitent and unbelieving; and thus overthrow, as they think, the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in holiness. On the other hand, it is contended by some, that the description of character here presented does not necessarily imply the possession of true religion, and is therefore irrelevant to the question of the saints' perseverance. That self-deceived persons and hypocrites should fall away from the appearance of piety, say they, is nothing strange. Some have thought that the word "impossible" ought to be understood, not in an absolute, but in a limited sense, as meaning

exceedingly difficult; while others understand it as designed to convey the idea that God *cannot consistently*, and of course *will not*, renew again to repentance such apostates as are here spoken of. Such being the diverse and clashing opinions respecting this passage, many good men have been perplexed, and found it difficult, if not impossible, to determine what is truth. With the hope of throwing a little light on the obscurities and difficulties of the text, we shall propose, and endeavor to answer, the following inquiries.

1. *Does this paragraph relate to real Christians?* This question we are inclined to answer in the affirmative, for the following reasons. In the first place, the whole epistle is addressed to Hebrews who had made a public profession of Christianity. The writer calls them "holy brethren"—"partakers of the heavenly calling." He exhorts them to "consider attentively the Apostle and High-priest of their profession"—to "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering." Indeed, it is the principal object of the epistle to guard those addressed against the danger of apostacy from their religion. This being the case, it is reasonable to suppose that the apostle considered them Christians. For surely he would not have taken so much pains to warn a company of hypocrites and unbelievers against defection from a faith which they had never received. Such a course would have proved, beyond a doubt, that he was "beside himself," and verily "mad." If then the epistle, as a whole, was addressed to Christians, it would seem not at all improbable, to say the least, that the portion of it under consideration has reference to the same class of persons.

Furthermore, that this passage has reference to real Christians seems quite evident from the language itself. The persons spoken of are described as having been "enlightened," i. e. instructed with regard to the true nature, doctrines, and duties of the Christian religion. They are said to have "tasted the heavenly gift;" i. e. to have known by experience the kindness and love of God as exhibited in the truths, promises, and privileges of the gospel. "Partakers of the Holy Ghost." "I understand this," says a learned commentator, "of the extraordinary gifts and influences of the Spirit." "Tasted the good word of God;" i. e. "enjoyed the consolations administered, or the hopes excited, by the divine promises of the gospel." For, according to scriptural usage, "good word" signifies *promise;* and "tasted," in its metaphorical sense, means "known by experience." To "taste of death," for instance, is to *experience* death. Certainly, then, the persons here described had the fullest evidence of the divine origin and nature of the religion of Christ. And if experimental knowledge of the truths, promises, and hopes of the gospel does not make a man a Christian, what does? Besides, it is added, "If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them *again* to repentance." This must put the question at rest. For if the writer does not suppose them to have exercised genuine repentance, why does he speak of the impossibility of their being renewed *again*—i. e. a *second time*—to repentance? It is then sufficiently evident that the persons referred to in the text were considered by the apostle as real Christians, and not mere professors.

2. *What are we to understand by the supposition, "If they shall fall away?"* The answer is at hand. For a Christian to "fall away" in such a sense, and *to such a degree,* as to render his recovery again to repentance "impossible," it

is certain that he must renounce and totally dispossess himself of all true religion. The salt must lose its savor. The light within him must become darkness. The Holy Spirit must take his final departure. Having tasted the good word of God, and enjoyed a foretaste of the heavenly bliss, he must reject the blessed promise, and root out from his soul every vestige of divine love and joy and peace. Instead of godly sorrow for sin, he must assume a total hardness of heart, and become an impenitent rebellious sinner, "fully set to do evil." The Christian who shall pursue this course will have fallen away so far as to render his recovery to repentance and salvation for ever impossible. There will remain for him nothing "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." If then the apostle is here speaking of Christians; and if he means, by "falling away," utter apostacy, or entire renunciation of their religion, it may not be unprofitable to inquire,

3. *Why is it impossible to renew them again to repentance?* This inquiry the apostle has answered in the last clause of the text: "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,"—i. e. because they treat the Savior with the greatest ignominy and contempt, and expose him to public shame. If a Christian should "fall away" in the manner which has been described, he would virtually and publicly pronounce the Son of God an impostor, worthy of the crucifixion which he suffered, and would at the same time do despite to the Spirit of grace. And we are here taught that his sin in so doing would be too great and heaven-daring ever to be forgiven. The Scriptures in various places intimate, not obscurely, that there is a point in the progress of sin from beyond which there is no return—where the curse of eternal death reigns without the possibility of its removal. Of those who pass this terrible crisis in their moral being, God is represented as saying, "they are joined to idols, let them alone"—"there remaineth" for them "no more sacrifice for sin." The persons spoken of in the text are said to have been "enlightened" in regard to the doctrines, duties, and privileges of Christianity; to have "tasted" or experienced the power of religion in their hearts; to have known the joy and peace which the good word of God can impart; in short, to have had the fullest and most indubitable evidence which it is possible to have of the divine origin, truth, and glory of the gospel. If, therefore, they should reject this light, eradicate these holy affections, and return to a state of active enmity to God, it is plain that their guilt would be aggravated and heinous in the highest conceivable degree. If left to themselves they would never repent. As for motives, they have already rejected the most powerful of which we have any knowledge or conception. And God, it would seem, intends here to inform us, that it would be inconsistent with the honour of his character and government—in other words, morally "impossible—to renew them again to repentance." Whether, therefore, we look at the individuals themselves, at the power of motives, or at the grace of God, their case is utterly hopeless. Such apostates have never forgiveness, either in this world, or that which is to come. But,

4. *Is it possible, in the nature of things, for a Christian thus totally to apostatize from God?* That there is nothing in the *nature of holiness* or of *moral agency* to render such a catastrophe in itself impossible, is evident from two great facts recorded in the Bible: to wit, the fall of angels, and the fall of man. The angels who now inhabit the abyss of wo were once the friends of God. But they

"kept not their first estate" of holiness—they sinned—and were cast down to hell. Adam was originally holy; but he was seduced from his allegiance, and became an apostate from God. Why then is it impossible, *in the nature of things*, for a Christian to "fall away?" If angels and our great ancestor could apostatize, what is there in the nature of a Christian, imperfectly sanctified, to make it impossible for him to "fall away?" He was once in a state of hostility to God. But the divine Spirit has breathed upon him—a ray of heavenly light has beamed upon his soul. He has some love to God—a degree of true holiness; though it seems to him, not unfrequently, like a drop of oil in a tumultuous ocean; he can with difficulty get sight of it. He is still a great sinner. He has a treacherous heart, which cannot be trusted. He is besieged by a numerous and powerful host of enemies and temptations. Without are fightings, within are fears, and dangers everywhere. In himself he is weak and entirely defenceless. If left to his own strength, he knows that he shall fall and perish. When he looks at himself, he is very far from thinking it impossible for him to fall away. When he considers that the whole current of an ungodly world is against him; that there is in his very soul a strong tide of evil affections bearing him away from God; and that in himself he is altogether helpless, he, at times, cannot but feel that he is in danger of apostacy and final ruin. To a Christian in such circumstances, how appropriate the fearful warnings and threatenings of the Bible! They suit his case—are just what he needs. And truly, what can be the meaning of those numerous warnings against apostacy, if there is any thing in the nature of the Christian character itself which renders such apostacy impossible? What propriety can there be in holding up to view the awful consequences of defection from the religion of Christ, if, from the nature of the case, such a thing cannot be? Why tell a man to take heed lest he fall from yonder precipice, and be dashed in pieces, when in fact no precipice is there? Can such warnings be sincere? Can they proceed from a God of truth? Besides, is not the possibility of apostacy implied in the very nature of moral agents in a state of probation? For myself, I can see nothing in the nature of holiness, or of moral agency, or of the Christian character; nothing, in short, in the nature of things which should render it impossible for a Christian totally to apostatize from God. Indeed, if left to himself, there is sufficient reason to believe that he would actually "draw back to perdition."

5. *Have we reason to believe that any real Christian ever did, or ever will, fall away, and finally perish?* The answer to this inquiry must depend on the question, Whether God has promised by his grace to prevent such a catastrophe? That there is nothing *in the nature of things* which renders it impossible for the believer to "fall away" has already, we think, been shown. Indeed, it seems quite probable, that he would apostatize and perish, without the intervention and sustaining power of Divine grace. So that the Christian's hope of final perseverance must be in God. If God has promised to defend him from the dangers to which he is exposed, why then he will be defended and kept; otherwise, he may stumble and fall. The question then before us is simply, What saith the Scripture?

I shall not now enter into an extended discussion of this subject, but will endeavor to present some of the more prominent passages of Scripture which have a bearing upon it. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and I know *them, and they* follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall

never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Here then is a direct promise of the great Head of the church to his people, that they shall never perish, nor be plucked out of his hand. Observe, too, that he says, "*I know them.*" If, now, any of them should "fall away," in the sense of the text, with what truth can he say to them in the great day, as he will say to all on his left-hand, "*I never knew you?*" Again, he tells them, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" as much as to say, that *their* eternal life is as secure as *his own.* "Being confident," says an apostle, "of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." But if he does not perform it, and the work of grace is cut short, so that the Christian fails of heaven; the confidence of the inspired apostle was certainly misplaced, and the encouragement which he intended to afford his Philippian brethren had no foundation in truth. Peter also encourages his brethren, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," with the same doctrine; telling them that they "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." What can be plainer or more positive than this declaration? "Moreover," says Paul, "whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here the golden chain of Divine grace is unbroken; not a link is wanting. On the one hand, it is made fast in the eternal purpose of God; and extending through the effectual calling, and the free justification, reaches to eternal glory. Believing this, the apostle triumphantly exclaims, "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The beloved John, speaking of certain heretics, says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have *continued* with us." In what plainer terms could he have declared his belief in the final perseverance of the saints? And does not the great Intercessor pray, that "all who believe on him may be with him where he is, and behold his glory?" and are not the pleas of such an Advocate always successful? Besides, if the sinner who has repented and fled to Christ for refuge is not "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," to what purpose do angels rejoice over him? If they do not believe the final perseverance of the saints, their joy over repenting sinners, it would seem, must be mingled with much trembling and many fears. And what is the purport of that covenant which God has made with his people? Is it not that he will be their God? that, as their day is, so shall their strength be? that he will withhold no good thing from them? and that his grace shall be sufficient for them in all their trials and temptations? And has he not "confirmed his promise by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, his people might have strong consolation?" Here, indeed, is "strong consolation" for the oppressed, tempted, trembling believer. God, who hath promised, abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.

These are some of the reasons which induce me to believe that no real Christian ever did, or ever will, "fall away" so as to come short of heaven. His safety, however, lies not in himself, nor in the nature of holiness, nor in the powers of moral agency; but *in the promised grace of a covenant keeping God.* Left to himself, he no doubt would fall to rise no more; but through Christ

strengthening and sustaining him, he will come off victorious over every foe, and obtain salvation with eternal glory. But if these things are so, it may be asked,

6. *Of what use are such fearful warnings against apostacy as those contained in the text, and in many other passages of the inspired volume?*

In answer to this, I should say, that God deals with Christians as free agents and subjects of moral government. And, so far as we know, there is no way in which a moral government can be administered except through the medium of motives. To resort to any thing like physical force in the government of moral agents would manifestly be an infringement of their freedom of choice and refusal. If then Christians are free moral agents, and God has determined to secure their final perseverance in holiness, what means can be so well adapted to accomplish this object as those which he has in fact adopted, that is, *moral means?* Physical force would be altogether incongruous, and incompatible with the end to be secured. A moral object must be attained by moral means. The perseverance of the saints, being an object of a moral nature, must be secured, if secured at all, by means of a similar nature. And now I ask, what are the truths, and promises, and consolations, and warnings, and reproofs, and threatenings of the Bible, but so many *means* of a moral nature, which God is using in order to secure the salvation of his people whom he foreknew? By these, God addresses the principles of love and gratitude, of hope and fear, which are implanted in them. On the supposition that it is his purpose to keep his people through faith unto salvation, can we imagine any means more suitable for the attainment of this object? And are not these every way fitted to accomplish it? If, for instance, the Christian is inquiring for the path of duty in a particular case, he will find in the word of God either a direct precept, a general principle, or an inspired example, recorded for his instruction. Is he disheartened in view of the number and greatness of his sins, and fearful that he shall not be able to hold on his way? Here is a promise of all needful grace for his encouragement. Is he running greedily after things seen and temporal? He may hear that warning voice, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Perhaps after he has put his hand to the plough, he is tempted, by a deceitful world, and a still more deceitful heart, to look back wishfully, as did the Hebrews towards the land of their servitude, and is wellnigh ready to give up his efforts to obtain salvation. But the thought has scarcely found entrance into his heart, ere he is met by some fearful threatening from the Divine Word, which, like an angel of God with a drawn sword in his hand, stands in his path, crying, Wo, wo, wo; this is the way to eternal death; whoso walks therein shall never return. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Now are not such tremendous warnings well adapted to make the wayward Christian pause and bethink himself? Were they not caused to be written *for this very purpose*? In like manner, nearly all the leading doctrines of

revelation are fitted, on the one hand, to strike terror into the minds of the halting, the careless, the disobedient; and on the other, to afford comfort and encouragement to those who are panting and struggling for the prize of their high calling. It is in this way, as I apprehend, that God fulfils his promises, accomplishes his gracious purpose respecting his people, and carries them safely through their conflict, onward to the glories of a complete, eternal conquest. These awful warnings and threatenings are a part of those moral means which he uses with Christians as moral agents, in order to keep them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation.

7. *But how, it may be asked, shall we account for those instances of apparent defection from true religion, which we sometimes witness?* "They went out from us," says the apostle, "but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." This passage lets us, at once, into the secret of all such apostacies. The religion of such persons was only a deceptive appearance, not a reality. Their moral sensibilities were perhaps aroused; they felt that they were sinners exposed to the penalty of God's law, and trembled in view of the doom which awaits the ungodly! But instead of submitting themselves unreservedly to God, a rebellious, deceitful heart led them astray, and they took shelter in some refuge of lies. And now, supposing themselves to be secure from danger, they were filled with great joy and peace; and mistook these things for religion. For a time they seemed to run well, and gave promise, it may be, of being ornaments to the kingdom of Christ on earth. But their joy and peace gradually subsided into a lethargic stupidity; and by-and-by, they were offended, and went back. And this is just what we should have expected from the first, had we known their hearts. They "fell away," not from religion, for this they never possessed, but from the *appearance* of religion. And what wonder is it, when the winds blow, and the floods come, that a house built upon the sand should fall, and be swept away? Sometimes indeed these deceptive appearances are kept up for a long course of years, and even through life; but the hypocrite will fall at last—his hope will perish at the giving up of the ghost.

8. *What class of professed Christians have a right to derive encouragement and consolation from the doctrine of the saints' perseverance?* Certain it is, there are not a few that call themselves Christians—who have no right to take encouragement from this or any other doctrine of the Bible. Too often, alas! do we find within the enclosures of the sanctuary careless, stupid professors, who, if they ever knew any thing of the power of religion, are at present very far from God. And there are some who, if we may judge from their fruits, are mere baptized worldlings, whose chief evidence of discipleship is, that they are seen, from time to time, sitting at the table of Christ. None of these surely have any title to the "strong consolation" which flows from the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. And if they are disposed to take encouragement from it, this in itself is fearful evidence against them. If we look at the manner in which the apostles made use of this doctrine, we shall find that it is generally thrown in as matter of encouragement to those Christians who are struggling with difficulties, and contending with trials which darken their hopes, and make them fear and tremble for their safety. In the secret recesses of the believer's heart, there is sometimes a violent, agonizing struggle, unknown to any except himself and that God who seeth in secret. He is afflicted, and tossed with

tempests. The deep depravity of his nature is unveiled. He can describe the workings of his inherent pollution only by saying, "Deep calleth unto deep." He is wellnigh overwhelmed; his heart sinks within him; his courage fails. Now to a Christian in such circumstances, how appropriate the promises of all needful grace and strength! They are like cold water to a thirsty soul. When he reads the declaration of Christ, that his followers "shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand," it inspires him with new hope and fresh courage. He girds on his armor, and goes forth to the conflict, humbly trusting that, through Christ, he shall yet come off more than conqueror, over sin, and death, and hell. The assured hope of victory does not, as some seem to suppose, paralyze his efforts, and make him resign himself up to sloth. Far from it. It nerves his arm; quickens his pace; and rouses up all the energies of his soul. Christians in these and similar circumstances have a right to the consolation which flows from this doctrine. It is their peculiar privilege.

In bringing these remarks to a close, let me admonish Christians that they are beset with dangers great and real; that they have need to watch and pray without ceasing; that they have a great and difficult work to accomplish; and that the evidence of their union with Christ will not be full and complete till the conflict is ended, the victory won. Have you, then, suffered the love of the world, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, to lead you captive? Have you lost that delightful sense of the Divine presence and favor which you once enjoyed? Have prayer and secret communion with God become a weariness? Are you running greedily after the riches and honors and pleasures of this fleeting world? Has the fear of man driven you from the post of duty, and made you relinquish what, as a Christian, you could not relinquish without violating your covenant vows? Then let me tell you, that you have no right to take encouragement from the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in holiness; it does not apply to you: but if there be truth in the Bible, your soul is in danger. Many a poor deluded mortal has suffered shipwreck in the very seas which you are now sailing. Here, too, the foot of many a Christian has slipped, and he has fallen, oh how low! has pierced himself through with many sorrows, and perhaps gone down to the grave in the bitterness of his spirit. Ah! survey these melancholy wrecks. Recollect those which you yourself have witnessed; and remember the solemn admonition, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." If you are disposed to quiet yourself in your wanderings, on the ground that you were once converted, and shall therefore be saved; there is fearful evidence that you are yet in your sins, and have no part nor lot in the great salvation. Oh, then, rouse up, awake to righteousness, and sin no more. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." For thus saith the Lord, "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die." "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves *the Son of God* afresh, and put him to an open shame."

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SERMON CXLIII.

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NEW-YORK.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH.

Genesis xlv. 28.—*And Israel said, it is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.*

The same sons who had practised an ingenious falsehood to convince Jacob that Joseph was dead, afterward found it more difficult, by telling the truth, to convince him that Joseph was yet alive, and the governor of all Egypt. There is a natural caution in the human mind against admitting the evidence of a delightful discovery; for the dawn of hope concerning a great benefit awakens fear lest it should fail to be made our own; and the heart vibrates between confidence and diffidence until the evidence is reviewed, and becomes too clear to admit of doubt. While the patriarch listened to the story of his sons, concerning the greatness of Joseph, his heart fainted with doubt; but when he went forth from his tent, and saw the wagons which Joseph had sent, his spirit revived, and he said, "It is enough"—I am satisfied: "Joseph my son is yet alive."

This discovery of Joseph removed from the mind of Jacob a load of grief, which the old man had long sustained, and even cherished with sacred fondness; for his tenderest affections were ever connected with Rachel and Joseph, both of whom had been early taken from him. He had refused to forget them: but now he was comforted. He was sure that Joseph was yet alive, and a man of great power in Egypt, and he prepared for his journey.

But between the departure of Joseph from his father and this discovery of him in Egypt, there was a long and mysterious chasm of which Jacob knew nothing, but which he was anxious to explore. He wished to hear by what marvellous course his son had been preserved alive, and how he

had made his way to the station he now filled. You may naturally suppose him questioning his sons, whenever they halted in their journey through the wilderness of Arabia, towards the city of the King of Egypt.

His sons knew more of this matter than they wished to relate. They had kept the secret from their father for a long course of years; and even now they had no inclination to reveal it. They found themselves in an extremely painful attitude. They were urged by the pressure of famine, and the fear of Joseph, to take their father down to Egypt; but, in doing so, they were sure that their father would learn every thing from his favorite son, and, possibly, they might both turn against the whole family and punish them. Guilt is ever distrustful; it throws its own shadow on those around, and then fears to confide in them. The guilty brothers were afraid and ashamed to confess their former treachery; their forced and late repentance might be doubted: and yet they were more afraid of their brother than of their father; therefore they resolved, if possible, to obtain the forgiveness of their father while on the way to Egypt, and to secure him as their mediator with Joseph.

But how shall they break the disgraceful secret? There was one of them who had not consented to their wickedness until it was done. Reuben had intended to deliver Joseph from the pit, and restore him to his father; though, after he failed in that, he joined with his brethren in the falsehood about finding the bloody garment. He could most safely open the matter to the old man, and plead for his brethren, because he would not be pleading for himself.

But when Jacob knew that Joseph had entered Egypt as a slave, it was more than ever mysterious how he had risen to be governor of all the kingdom! There is a melancholy pleasure in reviewing the hardships of our friends, when we see them restored to happiness. The tears shed by Jacob, at the thought of Joseph having been a slave, were mingled with joy, and he was eager to learn the steps of his elevation from slavery to power and honor.

You know the history. But it may not be unprofitable to pause on some points of it, and make the reflections which we may well suppose the father made, as from time to time he listened to the personal narrative of his favorite son.

I. In a few days after leaving his father, Joseph found himself the slave of Potiphar, the captain of the body-guard of the King of Egypt. There was no hope of returning, or of sending, to his father. Now, observe his conduct. Instead of cursing his lot, and yielding to sullen despondency, he at once set himself to make the best of his condition. He applied all his faculties to serve his master, and secure his confidence and kindness. And he was successful. How much happier was he, while rising in his master's esteem by unwearied faithfulness, than his brethren, who were living in luxury, while their father's grief reproached them as often as they saw his face! Better is slavery in a strange land, with a pure conscience, than liberty and abundance with a guilty mind.

You see, by the conduct of Joseph, that enjoyment can be found in

almost any condition, if a man is resolved to accommodate himself to it and improve it. Even hell itself would lose half its terrors, if the possibility and the inclination for improvement and usefulness could there be found. And it is of little importance to the ultimate happiness of life, at how low a point of depression a man begins to improve his condition; for even the worst men find it their interest to employ and reward ability and integrity.

But how came Potiphar to promote Joseph? The history answers: "He saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." True piety, religious principle, illustrated by a faithful life, is the best recommendation a youth can offer to one whose confidence he wishes to secure. The youth who enters a city with "the fear of God before his eyes," and leads a holy life, is, on that account more likely to be prosperous and happy, than he could possibly be without it.

II. We next find Joseph in temptation, exposed to imminent danger of ruin; not only enticed under circumstances which promised concealment, but aware that if he declined, he might be ruined in his master's esteem by a false accusation. How true it is, that snares and dangers thicken in the path of promotion and prosperity. They appear in new and unexpected forms, and under fair disguises. They lull suspicion to sleep,—they elude all guards but *One;* and that One stood revealed to Joseph's mind in the hour of his greatest danger, and threw around him that shield of heavenly chastity which averted the shafts of vicious pleasure, and inspired a deep abhorrence of the sin; it was the *Holy One*, whose voice had called Abraham from his native land; whose blessing was renewed on Isaac; who stood by Jacob's pillow of stones at Bethel, and who now defended Jacob's favorite son from ruin, though he left him to be tried by new suffering in the dungeon of the king's prison.

You see by what power he resisted temptation. The *fear of God* was before his eyes. "How can I do this great wickedness, and *sin against God?*" He was a pious man. And in the midst of a heathen city, among a vicious and pleasure-loving people, he "walked with God;" he felt that the Lord was ever about his bed and his path, spying out all his ways, and taking knowledge of the words of his tongue and the thoughts of his heart. This was the power that preserved him. O, how inestimably valuable is this power to a young man, separated from his home, and thrown into the midst of a gay and corrupted city! How manifestly the happiness of a whole family is sometimes suspended on his possessing this holy self-command in the moment of trial! Such was the case of Joseph, though he knew it not at the time. If this heavenly wisdom dwelt in the breast of all the youth among us, how many fathers would be happy who are now broken-hearted, or filled with anxious care.

III. We next find Joseph in prison. What a strange reward for his faithfulness to his master and his piety to his God! But even in the

prison he was not broken by dejection. Though in a much worse condition than at the beginning of his slavery, yet he was not in despair, but immediately applied himself to make the best improvement of it. The keeper of a prison is the last man in the world to confide in those around him. Commitment to prison is a bad recommendation to confidence. But Joseph found the way to his keeper's heart, by making himself useful, and showing faithfulness in all things. Having done all he could to deserve friendship and relief, he waited patiently for the Lord. Bad as his condition was, it was better than that of his guilty brethren; far better than that of his false accuser. The consciousness of suffering wrong, yet suffering patiently,—relying on God for final vindication, is itself the source of more happiness than can ever dwell with a guilty mind in the most favorable circumstances. Years rolled away, and no deliverance came. "The chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." But at last, at the very best time, the Lord interposed in a way which left no doubt of his hand being in the work. He showed that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, and he turneth it about whithersoever he will." Joseph stands before Pharaoh the approved interpreter, invested with power to govern the kingdom, and second only to the king whose throne he is to support.

IV. Here we are to observe him in a station more trying to his piety and virtue, than any he had before occupied. He might have taken to himself the honor of the interpretation, but he gave it all to God; and therefore God honored him the more. "Them that honor me, I will honor; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And Pharaoh gave him the significant appellation,—"*The man to whom secrets are revealed:*" for (said he), "inasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house."

The hour of complete triumph to a man who has been wrongfully oppressed, is the most dangerous hour of his life. If there is any lurking malice in his heart, that is the time for it to break out and disgrace him. Potiphar and his treacherous wife were now in the power of Joseph; he could have degraded or destroyed them; but he was too pious, and too happy, and too well employed, to take even the trouble to render them more contemptible than their own feelings must have made them, as often as they saw him. It was now in his power to have avenged himself on his cruel brethren. He could have commissioned, perhaps, the same company of Ishmaelites who brought him into Egypt, to return through Padan-Aram and destroy their flocks, and rob them of their silver and gold, and murder them, or carry them off and sell them for slaves. But he thought too much of the providence of God, and too much of his early dream, and he loved his father's house too well to yield to the suggestions of revenge. And doubtless he had it in his heart to make himself known to his family, whenever he should see his affairs in Egypt in such a state as to render it expedient. But before

the seven years of famine were ended, he received notice of his father's approach; "and he made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, at Goshen, and he presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while."

In the retirement at Goshen, the patriarch heard from the lips of his beloved son the entire narrative of his adventures, his sufferings, and his promotion. You imagine the old man, at every pause and turn in the narrative, giving vent to his long-smothered feelings of paternal fondness. You hear him praise alternately the fortitude, the forbearance, the magnanimity, the condescension of his heart. You see his embarrassed intercession with Joseph for his guilty brothers—until Joseph stops him by the assurance of their pardon. And you see them united in fervent adoration of the God of Abraham, to whom entirely they ascribe their preservation and their blessings.

It is a natural wish of men to close their lives at the accomplishment of some great and interesting event. "And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." So the aged Simeon felt, when he took the infant Jesus in his arms, and blessed God for the sight, "saying, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." And so that Savior himself exclaimed (with Divine satisfaction), "*It is finished*, and bowed his head and died." But the patriarch was spared for many years to see the prosperity of his family. He found, indeed, that "Joseph his son was yet alive;" and he realized more than he anticipated when he resolved, "I will go and see him before I die;" for he lived to bless the sons of Joseph.

Let us now draw from this subject some lessons of practical wisdom. And,

First: In this piece of ancient family history, *parents* may see the importance to themselves and their families of giving their children pious instruction at the earliest period in which they can receive it.

1. You know not how early, nor by what means any one of your children may be separated from you for a long term of years, or even for life. But if your child goes out imbued with the fear of the Lord, a pious child, he will be sustained in sufferings and temptations; he will walk safely in the most slippery paths, because the unseen hand of the Lord will conduct him; and all his wanderings will terminate in heaven at last. Yours will be the happiness of having given birth to an heir of eternal glory. Had Jacob died in utter ignorance of the history of his lost son, he would still have met him, after a few years, in a world where the power and glory of a governor of Egypt would be as nothing. Hannah, a poor but pious mother in Israel, *did more* for *her son*, than Philip of Macedonia did for *his*.

2. The pious son who is removed from your family at a tender age, and for a long time has no interest in your affairs, may prove to be the main pillar of your house, when there is no other person to prevent its fall. "Riches take to themselves wings." Prospects that seem quite too fair for disappointment, fade and change in a day. And in the strange revolutions of human events, your old age and all the hopes of your house may lean on one, whom you had long relinquished the hope of seeing on earth. The whole family of Jacob, who afterward became a great and happy nation, found a preserver in such a son. But had that son been any thing less than the pious, prudent, energetic, and self-commanding man he was, he could not have saved his family and nation.

3. It may be, that the piety of one such child shall become in following years the means of reformation and conversion to many others in your family, who had abused pious instructions in their early years, and fallen into ways of vice and wickedness. In the brief narrative of Joseph's intercourse with his guilty brothers, you find him taking a course exactly suited to convince them of their sins; and it had the effect he intended: you then find him treating them generously and kindly through all their remaining years; encouraging them by a view of the providence which overruled their wickedness for the good of them all; and after the death of their father, when they feared that he would punish them, and they sent a messenger to tell him how his father had spoken of the same matter in their behalf before his death, he wept; he was grieved that they should think him capable of such weakness and cruelty, after all the kindness he had shown them. There is reason to suppose that he was a spiritual benefactor to very many of his father's descendants.

4. The consolation you may find in such a son, at the period of old age, will be a rich and appropriate reward of your prayerful diligence in his early religious education. The sympathizing friends of an aged man must become fewer every year, unless he finds them in the family of his own descendants. He is not sure to find them *there*, unless they are pious. But if he has the honor to be their spiritual father, they are his by a tie, that no change of time or infirmity of age can sever. The picture of pious children sustaining a very infirm, but eminently pious parent, is fit to adorn that mansion where infirmity shall never enter.

In every view of their family's happiness, and their own, then, let parents be encouraged to pursue without weariness the pious education of their children. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand;" for although they may be prematurely severed from your domestic circle, or yourself removed from the world, while yet the seeds of truth have scarcely sent up one well-defined leaf from their young minds, yet remember the promise,—"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

Secondly: Let the *youthful members* of this audience learn the great value of genuine piety. Joseph is one of the most perfect characters delineated in the Old Testament. And no doubt the Inspirer of the sacred Scriptures intended to hold up this example to the imitation of countless millions. It is the more happy example, on account of the adversity he sustained, and the prosperity to which he rose, and also because he was immersed in public affairs, which some have imagined incompatible with a holy life.

We have seen in this example, at every step, that his early piety was his preservation. He was thrown into the most dangerous and trying situations that can be conceived; but his wisdom remained with him in them all. He passed through adversity and prosperity, as gold passes through the fire, only to be purified by the trial. He gained the confidence and friendship of all who could be gained by condescension, obedience, industry, and integrity. He rose against a host of obstacles, and his whole course proves that "godliness is profitable for the life that *now is*."

Enlightened piety is a safeguard against those errors and follies, by which the young (especially in large towns) are very often defeated in their plans of prosperity and happiness. The heart that has been honestly and fervently engaged in religious meditation and prayer in the morning, will be in the fear of the Lord all the day; and the fear of the Lord is a regulator of the passions, and a sure foundation of practical wisdom. *Diligence* in *business* will harmonize with a fervent spirit of enlightened piety. Patience and perseverance will not forsake an enlightened candidate for eternal happiness. Extravagant gratifications will not beguile him from the path of strict integrity. But he will grow in favor with men, while he evidently enjoys the favor of God.

The great value of early established piety to our youth may be seen by a little attention to the evils suffered from the want of it, or from its decay in those who once enjoyed it.

It is very painful to know, what we cannot avoid knowing, of the decay of piety in many of the youth of this great metropolis,— especially in those youth who were hopeful Christians before they entered the city; and this pain is in some cases aggravated, when we observe the reasons why they neglect to make themselves known as Christians here. They throw down their armor to amuse themselves with the enemy, just when they are entering the most dangerous conflict, and are liable to be pierced by the first arrow that flies. They mingle with the unshielded company of youth, and all hasten "as a bird to the snare."

None of them *intend* to be snared and ruined. They all have a laudable plan of enterprise and prosperity. But they know not the strength of their enemies, or their own weakness; they know not the unnumbered ills they are bringing on themselves. A gloomy scene now passes before my recollection. Ah! it is a picture of the youthful suffering and ruin I have witnessed in the last six years, which might have been avoided if the piety of Joseph had preoccupied the hearts of the victims. And oh! what bitter grief and lamentation have they sent

back to the once peaceful dwellings from which they came out! How unlike the meeting of Jacob and Joseph have been their interviews with their parents! How incurable the sorrow they have occasioned to their families, who might have leaned on them for support! How sharp the thorns they have planted in the pillow of a pious father or mother! But all these *earthly ills* have their limit; while *there is a bed of everlasting* sorrow, spread for them that *despise the counsel of wisdom* and the *day of God's merciful visitation!*

Lastly; Let this subject persuade those who still enjoy the pious instruction and counsel of parents, to *improve them with the utmost diligence.* "Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thy heart; for they shall be an ornament of grace to thy head, and chains about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Happy, thrice happy the youth that findeth wisdom, while he is yet sheltered by the parental roof; for "the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." Begin your morning with fervent prayer over all the affairs of the day, and "the Lord shall be your shade on your right-hand;" call yourself to a faithful review at evening, and lie down with grateful acknowledgment, and "the angel of the Lord shall encamp around you and keep you." To whatever city or country your path may lead, there seek out and know the men that fear the Lord; there make the acquaintance and friendship of the ministers of God; there let your Christian character be known and maintained. And should the mysterious providence of God lead you to heathen lands, to the courts or the dungeons of heathen princes, *there* let it appear by all your deportment that you "serve the God of heaven," and love the Savior of the world: there, when you are tempted to sin, remember the history of Joseph; and let wisdom remain with you: and though you return not to bless the old age of pious parents, you shall meet them at length in the *New Jerusalem* on high. In *that* city there shall be *no sin,—no more curse,*—but the *throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it,* and *his servants shall serve him,* and they shall REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER.

SERMON CXLIV.

BY REV. WILLIAM NEVINS,
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THE SOLEMN QUESTION ANSWERED.

JEREMIAH viii. 6.—*What have I done?*

THE person now addressed, is supposed to ask, "What have I done?"—and it is designed to answer his question. Let no one refuse to consider the answer, on the ground that he knows already what he has done better than any one can tell him. It may appear, on examination, that you have yet much to learn in regard to what you have done. Nor let any one deny me a hearing on the plea, that it matters not what he has done. It matters *much*—you are a moral and accountable agent, answerable for your conduct to God. There is a rule by which it should be regulated. God is the author of that rule; and he is the avenger of its violations. There is a conduct which is pleasing to him, and a conduct which is displeasing: and whether he be pleased or displeased, whether he smile or frown, is certainly of *some* consequence.

The inquiry relates not merely to overt acts: what you have done, embraces what you have *said*, *thought*, and *felt*, as well as what you have acted; and for all you are equally accountable. "The law is spiritual—the commandment is exceeding broad—God will bring every work into judgment with every *secret* thing—all a man's ways are right in his own eyes, but the Lord *pondereth the heart*—the Lord *weigheth the spirit.*"

This language, "What have I done?" sometimes bespeaks a mind utterly devoid of conviction. It asks in a spirit of self-justification, what evil the person has done. At other times it expresses the keenest sensibility to sin. A person having done something, the evil nature of which he did not at the time fully apprehend, and the sad consequences of which he did not foresee, when afterward he comes to perceive the evil and mischief of it, *exclaims*, in mingled alarm and grief, "What have I done!"

I shall consider it as the language of simple *inquiry;* as the serious *interrogation* of a person willing to know what he has done. And God grant that while I am answering the *interrogation*, "What have I done?" it may become the heart-felt *exclamation* of each impenitent hearer.

You ask what you have done. I will tell you; neither on the one hand extenuating, nor on the other exaggerating.

1. What if you had done *nothing?* You say, "What have I done?" meaning perhaps that you have done *nothing*, and supposing that this is a valid plea, a sufficient justification for you. But is it so? Can I not condemn you on your own admission, out of your own mouth? You have done *nothing!* But you are required to do *something*, ay *much*. You have done *nothing!* Then you have not loved God with all your heart, nor glorified him in your body and spirit, which are his. If you have done nothing, you have broken *one half* at least of the law of God. In so far as its *positive* requirements are concerned, you are guilty, according to your own confession. It was for *not doing*, that the inhabitants of Meroz were cursed—"they *came not* to the help of the Lord against the mighty." They staid at home and minded their worldly business. And Christ will say, he informs us, to those on his left-hand in the final day, when he bids them depart from him, "Inasmuch as ye *did it not*, &c." And he says also, "Cast ye the *unprofitable* servant (the servant that *does nothing*), into outer darkness." You have done nothing! But to do *nothing*, when there is so much required to be done, is to do *evil*, to do *wrong*, to do that which must cast you away for ever. You need do no more than *nothing* to ensure and justify your condemnation. Strange that you should expect to be justified for the very reason for which Christ says he will condemn men!—But

2. This plea, though it would not sustain you, if you could offer it, you cannot offer, for you *have done something*. You have not been idle. You are no mere *negative* character. You have acted under law, and in view of law, as a moral and accountable agent. As such you have performed innumerable acts, and have been the subject of numberless exercises of thought and feeling; each of which acts and exercises has possessed a moral character; has or has not been conformed to the revealed rule of duty; and is worthy of praise or blame. It is impossible to compute the number of times you have acted and been exercised in the capacity of a moral agent and an accountable subject of the law of God; and all these have been acts of obedience or of disobedience. Each exercise has been right or wrong. They have met the approbation of God, or provoked his displeasure. If they have been worthy of reward, they will be rewarded; if of punishment, they will be punished. Of the one or the other they are worthy. All the while you have lived, God has been looking on your heart and life, and in view of each emotion, thought, and act, has smiled or frowned.

Yes, you have done something—you have formed a *decided* character. You have laid up a large store of something for the future—you have done a great deal of good or of evil—you are very much in the right, or very far in the wrong—which is it? *What* have you done?

3. You have done *wrong*. You have acted unreasonably and unfitly. You have acted in opposition to those dictates of duty, which come to you from within. You have disobeyed conscience. You have transgressed the law written upon the heart.

You have done more—you have not only sinned against your own soul, but against God. You have disobeyed the Lord of conscience. You have acted contrary to his known will; broken his holy, just, and good law. You have done all this. You cannot deny it;—*wrong* and thus wrong.

4. Now suppose you had done this but once—suppose that of your innumerable acts and exercises, only one was *sinful*. Even on that hypothesis, you are guilty, condemned, inexcusable, and undone. You cannot answer for that one sin. The divine law tolerates sin in no respect, and in no instance. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them. He that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all." Gal. iii. 10. James ii. 10. The law of God is *one*, and he that breaks it in any part, breaks it all. The *angels* who kept not their first estate were consigned to the place they now occupy, in chains and utter darkness, for *doing wrong* ONCE. Did God wait for a *second* offence? Why should he? Does human law wait for the repetition of a crime? In like manner Adam, for *one* offence, incurred the sentence of death. Now if you have done wrong *only once*, you have done as much as dethroned the angels, and destroyed the father of the human race. If one offence ruined them, is not *one* enough to ruin you? But I need not speak on this supposition. For

5. You have done wrong *more than once*. How many times in your life do you suppose that you have acted, spoken, thought, and felt sinfully and wrong? So many times, that there is but one Being who *can* tell *how many*—and he *will* tell, when "the books are opened"—before assembled worlds.

Some appear to think that if their *wrong* doings, no matter how *many* they be, do not exceed their *right* doings; if their good deeds only outnumber by one their evil deeds, they have nothing to fear, and this is all that is required of them. For this opinion there is as little support derived from reason as from Scripture. There is none from either. It is absolute folly to think and talk thus. A man should be *ashamed* to entertain such an opinion. All analogy is against it. Is this all that the magistrate requires of the subject, or the parent of the child; viz. that they be careful to maintain a proper proportion between their acts of obedience and their acts of disobedience, never permitting the latter to outnumber the former? May the subject or the child break *this* law, provided only he obey *that?* Does not *all* law require *universal* obedience? Did any law ever allow or excuse its own trausgression in any respect or instance? There is not a government or society of any kind existing among men, having laws or rules for its regulation, which does not require the strict observance of all its rules by its every member. It punishes every breach of each rule. It does not wait till more than half of them are broken; and yet men expect that the great and jealous God will allow them to treat his holy, just, and good law, as no other law was ever allowed to be treated! And all the hope which many

have, is built on this expectation! Standing on this foundation, they are looking forward to the prospect of meeting God, with a calmness and confidence that nothing seems capable of disturbing. They acknowledge they have sinned, and they do not pretend that they have repented and secured an interest in the atonement. They have not, they suppose, sinned enough for that. It is not every sin, according to their notion, that renders repentance and a satisfaction necessary; but only the *surplusage* of sin, if any there should be after their good doings are subtracted from their evil ones! Into what absurdity and folly, not to say aggravated guilt, will erring mortals plunge! Sin first infatuates, then destroys them. It begins with making *fools* of them, and ends with making them *wretches!*

You perceive then, that it would avail nothing, though you could maintain the ground, that your right doings outnumber your wrong doings. But even this ground, were it available, you cannot maintain. For,

6. *You have not done more good than evil; more right than wrong.* The facts are against you. I know it is an astounding and unpalatable sentiment that I am about to advance; but it has the recommendation of being *true*, if it is not popular. You may disbelieve it, but you cannot *disprove* it. It is this—instead of having done more good than evil, if you are not now a penitent, a believer in Christ, a new creature; you have, so far as your moral nature is concerned, *done no good; you have done nothing right.* Your moral acts and exercises have been all of one kind, and *all evil*, all *wrong*. When this is said, it is not meant that your acts have been evil and wrong in every sense of those words. Right and good, according to the subordinate signification of those words, it is not disputed that you have done; but in the most important sense of the words, their *scriptural* sense, that sense of them in which they will be explained by God, and understood in the day of judgment (and that is the *true* sense of them), you have done "only evil," and that "continually." This assertion, though clothed with Divine authority, may give offence; but examine it carefully, remembering with whom you have to do.

Right is that which is conformable to the rule which God has given for the regulation of human conduct; that conformity having for its spring and principle the love of God, and for its object his glory. Now, though you have acted in some things agreeably to the revealed rule of God; yet has your *motive* been his *love*, and your *aim* his *glory?* It is quite possible to do things required by the law of God, and yet render no acceptable obedience to that law; for they may be done without any respect for the law; done for other reasons than that God requires them; or done rather from fear than love. To do right is to do *what* God requires, *because* he requires it, at the suggestion of *love*, and with a desire to *glorify him.* To do good is to do what is pleasing to God; but "without *faith* it is impossible to please him." There are no truly good works, according to the Scriptures, but those unto which we are "created in Christ Jesus." They that are in the flesh (i. e. in an

unregenerate state), cannot please God." "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And *it stands to reason*, that repentance, in the case of the sinner, must go before all acceptable obedience, and that all good in him must be the fruit and consequence of repentance. In the case of the rebelling subject or child, after the first act of rebellion and disobedience, it is all rebellion and disobedience up to the moment he repents and makes his submission. So it is with all who rebel against God.

Well then, it appears you have done wrong, and *nothing but wrong*. You have done a great deal, and it has all been evil. All the entries under your name, in the book of God's remembrance, are on one side. The other side is a blank. You will never have anything of your own to be entered there; and the obedience of the great Surety is not entered to your account, because you have not believed on him, and with all your heart confided in him as *your* Surety. So the case stands. This is what you have done. And now,

Consider *to whom* you have done it,—*to God*, the great, blessed, and benevolent God, your creator, preserver, and benefactor. You have broken *his* law, which is holy, just, and good; have transgressed his commandments, which are not grievous; and have refused to render to him that which is your reasonable service!

Consider *under what circumstances* you have done it; circumstances of *light* and *love;* in despite of exhortation and command, admonition and entreaty, promise and threatening, judgment and mercy; with heaven open to allure you, and hell uncovered to alarm you, and the cross of the Son of God in full view before you; you have acted wrong, with every inducement to act right.

Consider also the *evils* involved in such doings, under such circumstances; the presumption and rebellion; the impiety and injustice; the folly and madness; the baseness and daring; but above all the *ingratitude*, of having, under such circumstances, acted as you have acted towards God!

The *ingratitude!* There never was such a case of ingratitude before, and I suppose there never could be another like it. God never *so* loved any other world as to give his only-begotten Son to die for its inhabitants. *Such* goodness does not exist to lead other sinners to repentance. They have no such love to despise. They have no *blood* of atonement to tread under foot. They *cannot* be so ungrateful. The intervention of the Son of God to save rebel *man*, renders his case *peculiar*, and will render his condition hereafter peculiar. He will rise to the highest in heaven, or sink to the lowest in hell. He is the only sinner that ever received a call to repent and return. God never before sought to woo back a wandering soul to him. But for you, O *man*, He has bowed his heavens and come down. He has sent his Son after you. And what have you done? How have you requited God's gift of his Son? How have you met the mercies of redemption? How have you treated Christ? Has his story interested you? Has his cross attracted you?

Have you stopped and gone near to see and sympathize in those unparalleled sorrows, of which you were equally the *author* as the *object?* —For he, who died *for* you, died also *by* you.—Have you ever looked on him whom *you pierced*, and mourned? Have you given to him your heart? and are you living now to him who died for you? Alas! has he not been despised and rejected of you? Have you not *passed him by*, even if you have done no more?

But some, to all else they have done, are adding this, the last and worst they can do, *the resisting and grieving of the Holy Ghost.*—Art thou one of them?—They counterwork the Divine Spirit, who strive with them. God comes on a visit of mercy to them, and whispers in the ear of the soul, of pardon and heaven; but they say, "Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Lord that we should obey him?"—And he departs perhaps; for he says, "Be instructed O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee. My spirit shall not always strive with man." What then?—What is their history after that? I know not, but this I know, a dark death and a deep and desperate damnation are the subjects of the last chapter.

Sinner, there is one piece of advice, that as a friend I would give you. It is, that whatever you do, "quench not the Spirit." You may do any thing but that, and your case not be desperate. But if you quench the spirit, there remains no hope, there is no refuge left—there is no *fourth* person in the Godhead, to undertake the case of the sinner who has wilfully put away from him the light and fire of the Divine Spirit. Art thou grieving him? Beware!—Another hour—another moment—and he may depart for ever!

I have told you what you have done. Let me now urge you to consider the *consequences* of having done so; the great *guilt* you have incurred, the deep and virulent *depravity* you have contracted, the tremendous *wrath* you have treasured up for yourself, and the utter *ruin* you have entailed on soul and body, for time and for eternity. In doing what you have done, you have destroyed yourself. You have forfeited the divine favor, and lost the divine likeness. You are no longer a child and heir of God. That privilege and dignity are gone from you, and peace is gone, and purity is gone, and freedom and honor, and all but just one only hope is gone, and that is *going*, and unless you lay hold of it will soon be gone, never to return. You have blasted your prospects for eternity. You have caused a blight to come over the beauty and fruitfulness of the soul. You have lost all that was worth having, and have got in exchange nothing but what it is as much your interest as your duty to give up!

You have done what to undo, constituted a problem that baffled all created minds! You have done what to undo, required a special interposition from the adorable Trinity, and from the Son of God exacted suffering the deepest and most dreadful.

In fine, you have done, O sinner, so *much* that it is necessary you should do *something more.* And do you ask me what it is? Dost thou,

in view of what thou *hast done*, ask what thou *must do?* I am glad to hear that question—it indicates returning reason. I will briefly answer it. And

First,—You must do *something*—you must *act*—you will never be saved without your own agency. When the jailer asked this question, did Paul and Silas say, "Do nothing—wait—wait God's time?" A time, by the way, which cannot be *waited* for, because it has come already. It is *now*.

Secondly,—What you do, you must do *quickly*. The command of God urges you to *immediate* action. The difficulty of the work urges you. The uncertainty of life urges you. The ever-increasing hardness of the unregenerate heart, affords another argument for doing immediately what you find to do. "Behold *now* is the accepted time—behold *now* is the day of salvation."

Thirdly,—You cannot be saved by doing any thing which you *may choose* to do, aside from what God commands you to do. No amount of *unauthorized effort* will avail you any thing.

Fourthly,—You may do many things which the word of God approves, and even enjoins, and yet never be saved; for no one of them may be that *specific thing* to which the promise of salvation is made.

Fifthly,—There is *only one* thing that you can do to secure your salvation. You will be disappointed if you expect to be saved by doing *many* things. One act, one single exercise, is the indispensible requisite to salvation. What is it?

Sixthly,—That which you do *in order to be saved*, is not to make an *atonement* for sin, nor is it to acquire yourself a *title* to heaven: it is not any act whereby you may make yourself *better*, or recommend yourself to God. There is nothing expiatory, meritorious, or commendatory in what you are required to do. The *object* of the act is not to make atonement, but to receive an atonement already made. It is not to do something for yourself, but to avail yourself of what another has done for you.

Seventhly,—It is no *external* act or movement that is required. It is an act of the *soul*, a single, *confiding* act of the soul, the object of the confidence being Christ Jesus. There are two things presupposed as necessary to this act; viz. a sense of your need of him, and an apprehension of his suitableness and sufficiency for you. These existing, you have nothing to do that you may be saved, but heartily to *trust in him*. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Exercise a confiding faith in him, and all is done. Cease to do any thing for yourself, except cordially to trust Christ to do every thing for you.

This is what you must do. Now *do it*. It is reasonable that you should. Christ is altogether worthy of your confidence. He is *able* to save, and he is *willing*. He offers himself to you—He presses himself upon you. Receive him and you are saved. Do not be confounded by the very *simplicity* of the requirement. Do not say, "Can this be all?" I assure you it is *all*. And there is nothing to be done in preparation for doing this. If you know that you are a sinner, and believe that

Christ is a Savior, then as a sinner trust in that Savior. And you can do it *now*, as well as at any other time; yea, *better*. The duty will never be *different* from what it now is—never *easier*. *Will you do it now?* Now, while God waits to be gracious; and Jesus stands with arms extended, and with open heart to receive you; and the blessed Spirit striveth with you; *now*, when all things are ready, and all circumstances favor; now, in the strength of God, *will you do it?* What is your decision? It is known in heaven. It is recorded there.

"My former hopes are fled,
My terror now begins;
I feel, alas! that I am dead
In trespasses and sins.

Ah, whither shall I fly?
I hear the thunder roar;
The law proclaims destruction nigh,
And vengeance at the door.

When I review my ways,
I dread impending doom;
But sure, a friendly whisper says,
'Flee from the wrath to come.'

I see, or think I see,
A glimm'ring from afar;
A beam of day that shines for me,
To save me from despair."

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SERMON CXLV.

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THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.

Luke xix. 5.—*Zaccheus, make haste and come down.*

The publicans were persons concerned in collecting the tolls and customs, which the Roman government were used to let out to the highest bidder. And they sometimes gained wealth by those frauds and impositions for which their situation afforded so very favorable an opportunity. But a variety of causes concurred to bring the whole body of publicans into abhorrence and contempt with the Jews. For first, the Jews still considered themselves a free people, though in the time of our Savior they were under the power of the Romans, who with their usual policy allowed to them in a great measure the exercise of their own laws. This independent spirit made them regard imposts and taxes under every shape as the badge of slavery. What tended still more to aggravate the animosity against the publicans was their being themselves Jews. Of a stranger, a heathen, nothing better could be expected; but, for one of their brethren to take part with the enemies of God's people was an injury not to be endured. Hence you may form some idea of the nature and degree of that antipathy with which these men were regarded by the rest of the nation. Our blessed Lord drew upon himself much obloquy and resentment, by the condescending familiarity with which he conversed with a set of men so universally detested. This single trait in his character was enough, in the sight of bigoted Pharisees, to disparage every excellence that the strongest prejudice had to acknowledge in him. "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" was the taunting reproach made to his disciples. If this man were a prophet, he would know that they were sinners; that is, abandoned outcasts, whose touch was polluting. These were the principles that governed the judgment of self-righteous Jews, and caused them to condemn the noble conduct of the Redeemer, who considered none too low, too wretched,

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or too dissolute, to be beneath his regard or instruction. His efforts were directed to reclaim the most sinful: as he aptly expresses himself,—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

To the class of despised publicans belonged the person to whom Christ addressed the words of our text: "Zaccheus, make haste and come down." Of his previous character not much is said by the sacred writer; only from the account of his riches, and his own confession, it is evident that he was not behind his brethren in extortion and covetousness. We are told that "he was the chief among the publicans, and was rich"—one that speculated on a large scale; and who probably took large contracts, and let them out again to others. Had he dealt fairly and honestly in this matter there might have been no just cause for reproach. But there was too much ground for the dislike to which he and his fraternity were subject: though this does by no means excuse the virulent hatred of the Jews; much less does it justify the indiscriminate contempt with which they regarded a whole body of men, among whom, we may suppose, there must have been many honorable exceptions.

It appears that, for some reason or other, the publican named in the text had a very strong desire to see Jesus. Under the influence of this feeling he had come out with the multitude that flocked to Christ, as he was about to enter Jericho. Owing to his small stature, he was unable to gratify his wishes, while the press was so great as to prevent his near approach. He therefore ran before, and climbed up a tree, standing near the road where Jesus was to pass. Was it the mere curiosity to see a celebrated prophet that induced him to take this pains? It may be. Then it was the happiest curiosity that ever possessed the breast of Zaccheus. But the consideration of all the circumstances connected with the history, leads one rather to suppose that it was something more than an idle curiosity. It is very probable, that the accounts which he had previously received of the miracles and doctrines of Christ, had excited in his mind a wish to be more fully acquainted with this great Teacher. The desire to be taught, and the earnest wish to forsake his sinful course and to become a follower of Christ, were beginning to spring up in the recesses of his soul; but he deemed himself unworthy of notice from this sacred personage. He wants to obtain a sight of one whom he revered and dreaded. He must first be satisfied whether he is indeed of that mild and gracious and condescending character generally ascribed to him. Behold him seated in a convenient place, where he hopes, unobserved, to examine the features of the Savior, concerning whom he has exalted ideas. Here he waits in breathless expectation the approach of Jesus; but judge what was his surprise, when he observed that the Savior cast his eye upon him. "How did he discover me?" Jesus speaks—"Zaccheus!" "What! does he call me by name? Whence does he know me? Wo is me! Now he will expose me before all this multitude for my crimes. What shall I do? where shall I hide myself? "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." What language can describe the min-

gled sensations of astonishment and joy and gratitude, that seized the breast of Zaccheus, when he heard these gracious words. To be at once relieved from all his fears; so unexpectedly to have his utmost wish fulfilled; a wish that lay concealed in the bottom of his heart, to which he thought no human being was privy, which he durst scarce repeat in silence to himself. What a flood of light now poured upon his mental vision. "Sure, this is no ordinary man. This is more than a prophet. Truly he is the Son of God. Else how could he know, even better than myself, what was passing in my mind? But what benignity and grace beam from his countenance, and sound from his lips! How is it, that he overlooks the learned scribes, the self-righteous Pharisees, the great, and those in high esteem, these or similar reflections passed the mind of Zaccheus, you must not imagine that he waited to have all his doubts resolved. No sooner did the Savior accost him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down," than he unhesitatingly obeyed. Gratitude and joy lent speed to his limbs. Amid the sneers of Pharisees and scribes, and the murmurs of the astonished multitude, he conducts the Savior to his house, and gives him a cordial and a thankful welcome. Happy day! delightful meeting! Not only were his fears removed, but he felt himself to be another man. Repentance sprang up in his heart; faith in the Savior was called forth; new and heavenly hope beamed into his happy soul. His attachment to money was gone. Another and a holier affection now filled his heart. Zaccheus the extortioner, Zaccheus the publican, is now the devoted disciple of a self-denying Master. Such was the divine energy that accompanied those words—"Zaccheus, make haste and come down." Such the occasion, and such the delightful result of the Savior's gracious address.

Some profitable reflections very naturally arise from this portion of sacred history.

First; Observe the sovereignty of God in dispensing particular favors as he sees fit. This our Lord plainly taught when he thus addressed the people of Nazareth, where he had been brought up. "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." Then he proceeds to mention the case of Naaman too, the Syrian leper, who was healed by Elisha. The passage that we have been considering is full to the same purpose. So that we may employ the Savior's language, and say, Many publicans were in Jericho, but with none of them did Jesus abide, save with Zaccheus. Was it that he was more worthy than the rest? No. But we go farther. It is certainly to be supposed, that there were in Jericho many who bore a much better character than Zaccheus; who not only were free from the stigma attached to the office of a publican, but whose character was actually more correct. But it was not with one of this description, however esteemed of men, that Jesus chose to

abide on this occasion. What shall we say to these things? What better, than with the divine Redeemer to resolve it into the good pleasure of God, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." If this satisfied the Son of God in the days of his humiliation, sure it were arrogance for us, short-sighted creatures, to demand a more satisfactory reason. But, let us not fall into the opposite error, and imagine, because extraordinary means are employed when and where God sees fit in his infinite wisdom, for bringing rebellious creatures back to himself, that therefore the regular and ordinary means are not kindly intended. Though Jesus called but here and there one, for particular purposes, he never sent off any that came to him, imploring his assistance and grace. When he spoke harshly to the Canaanitish woman, it was but to put her faith to the test, that it might be more signally rewarded. And, on the other hand, neither are the extraordinary means that God sometimes employs, in themselves saving. We have but to refer you to the Jews, who saw the miracles wrought by Christ, who heard him preach, who were witnesses of his power, his eloquence—if I dare apply the term to the gracious words that fell from the Savior—his spotless innocence. What effect did these powerful persuasives produce upon the greater part? Did they not remain as prejudiced and obstinate as before? Need I advert to Judas, who was called as well as the other apostles, and yet remains, perhaps, the only individual of whom we can affirm without any fear of mistake, that he is "gone to his own place?" I know the turn that some will be ready to give to this subject, but for my own part I am satisfied with the solution of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard; wherefore let us also fear."

We notice, in the *second* place, that the passage under contemplation affords a striking example of the power of Divine grace. What a contrast is presented between Zaccheus the publican, and Zaccheus the disciple of Jesus! To what are we to ascribe this surprising change? Shall it be attributed to his climbing into the sycamore-tree to see the Savior? or to the ardent curiosity that instigated him? But you will answer, it was the wish to be benefited by the instructions of Christ. I might ask in return, Why did he not then attend his ministry? Three years or more had Jesus publicly preached through the towns and villages of Palestine, and Zaccheus had not even seen him yet. He could not be ignorant of his fame. It was near to Jericho that John the Baptist had announced the coming of the Son of God. But granting that the desire to be instructed was at the foundation of the great change that is observable in the man, tell me, whence proceeded the desire? Why did he not manifest it long before? Not to multiply questions of this sort, it is evident that it was Divine grace, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, that brought about this radical change in the views and desires and hopes of Zaccheus. And it is the same grace and the same Spirit to which we, my hearers, must look for a similar change in our hearts. In order to form some faint estimate of the aston-

ishing power of Divine grace displayed in Zaccheus, let us reflect upon his peculiar situation. He was rich. Remember what Christ, who well knew the human heart, said on another occasion, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" It is true that he afterward explained his meaning; "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the kingdom." But this was precisely the situation of this publican. He was covetous. And what is this but trusting in riches, setting up mammon for God? "Covetousness, which is idolatry." Further, he was not only covetous, but dishonest. He could dare to add to his store by unlawful means and fraudulent practices. Would to God that this description was not applicable in our day, that we could affirm there were no publicans, no extortioners among us, in this Christian land, in this enlightened age, imposing upon the ignorance or abusing the confidence of their brethren! But "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition."

Thirdly, Contemplate the effect produced by Divine grace upon the disposition and conduct of Zaccheus. "A tree is known by its fruits." And here there does not lack an early harvest of rich and heavenly fruit. Listen to the confession which he makes to Christ in the presence of his former companions. "And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Here, my brethren, is the proper evidence of a thorough repentance. A repentance that does not, like that of too many, evaporate in words, but which manifests itself in *deeds*. Is any of you fond of money; has he indulged himself in dishonest means to acquire it?—let him try to imitate this noble example; then he will be able to appreciate the change that took place in the breast of this publican, before he made the declaration you have heard. Where was now his covetousness, his attachment to wealth, the pride of property, the trust in uncertain riches, that had so long been the ruling passion of his heart? They were lost and absorbed in that new and heaven-born disposition which Divine grace had implanted.

We might next dwell upon the proof of his Divinity, which the Savior manifested when he called Zaccheus by name, a man to whom, humanly speaking, he was an utter stranger. But we pass over this point, and mention as our last reflection on this subject the *condescension* of the Lord Jesus; which he displayed both in his address and in his subsequent visit to the house of Zaccheus. How unexpected this kindness was to the latter we have already reminded you; and also how unaccountable the conduct of Christ appeared to the Jews, and how it excited loud murmurs of disapprobation on their part. As the world is composed of similar materials in our day, and as it is certain that God, who changeth not, deals with men now on the same principles as formerly, it is not to be wondered at, when we hear of, or witness, the conversion of persons whose once profligate lives and vicious

disposition made it appear extremely improbable that they would ever become pious,—it is not surprising, I say, that there should be those who murmur, and even seek to turn the subject into ridicule; or who are disposed to reproach the faithful and humble followers of Christ, in the language of the Pharisees: "What, eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" These men are not very likely, without an effort of Divine grace as remarkable as that we have been considering, ever to become the humble disciples of the self-denying Jesus.

The passage of Scripture narrative we have been contemplating commends itself more especially to the attention of all those who, like Zaccheus, are labouring under the bondage of a vicious habit, that by long use has grown into their very constitution. The same Savior who so graciously condescended to be guest to a despised publican is still alive. Though invisible to the outward senses, though removed as to his bodily presence, he is nigh by his Spirit. He has still the same compassionate heart for the most guilty and vile. He is as ready now as ever to set at liberty the miserable captives of Satan. He has the same power and the same willingness to forgive sins. All that he requires is humble faith, implicit confidence in his grace, obedience to his Spirit, and submission to his will. In return he stands engaged by promise and by oath, to deliver you from the power of your sins, to supply all your wants, to conduct you through this vale of death, to bring you to the enjoyment of perfect and unchangeable bliss. Why then should you delay to come to him, who graciously invites even you? Take up his easy yoke; bear his light burden. He will break asunder the iron chains that gall you; he will remove the load of guilt that presses you down.

It is true, some are, and ever have been, peculiarly favored; yet this need not discourage any soul disposed now to repent and turn to the Lord. To every one that trusts in the Lord and is diligent, all needful supply of grace shall be given.

Further, they who receive the largest manifestations of Divine grace are under a responsibility proportionably greater. What they receive is not so much for themselves as for the benefit of society; for the encouragement of all. When Christ miraculously fed the multitude in the wilderness, it was not to teach them to neglect the ordinary means of subsistence, in false reliance on his powerful arm, while they might spend their time in idleness. It was to excite them to greater diligence in his service, by showing them his ability and readiness to help in every time of need. Thus we may rest assured, that in spiritual things he is ever ready to bestow all needful grace. This we may infer from his condescension shown to Zaccheus. And had you but the same desire to come to Christ, you would soon hear his benignant voice. Were you but ready to receive him, he would soon take up his abode in your heart, not for a night, but for life, and for eternity. He would subdue your sinful lusts, break up your idolatrous attachment to the world, and elevate your affections to durable riches.

And is there not here present some Zaccheus, covetous, unprin-

cipled, selfish, the slave of vicious habit, to whom Christ even now says by his Spirit, "Make haste and come down?" O, then, obey the gracious call. The same grace that enabled Zaccheus to part with his wealth, so long the undisputed master of his heart, is ready for your assistance. The Lord's arm is not shortened, neither his ear dull of hearing. "Make haste." Seize the golden moment. Without Divine aid, all your efforts, however great they may seem, to overcome a vicious propensity, and to acquire a new disposition, will be utterly vain. But if you have faith, you shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and it shall be done. And when, by charity, by restitution, and sincere amendment, you manifest the genuineness of your repentance, then shall it be said of you, as of Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham." Precious opportunity! Oh, suffer it not to be unimproved. "Make haste;" Christ is now passing; he is willing to come in, and to abide with you for ever. O, receive him with your whole heart. "Make haste." For "riches and honor are with him; yea, durable riches and righteousness."

SERMON CXLVI.

Preached before the Synod of Geneva, and published at their unanimous request.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT'S AGENCY IN REGENERATION.

EZEKIEL XXXVI. 25, 26, 27.—*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

IN this passage we have a brief description of that work of grace by which men are transformed into the moral likeness of God. This work, it will be perceived, is eminently the work of God, or, as we are informed in other passages of Scripture, it is the office-work of the Holy Ghost. It is a work which God himself promises graciously to perform, on his "being inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." God everywhere claims the honor of this work, as being peculiarly his own. The publication of this fact is designed "to stain the pride of all human glory," and to excite the saints to "show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Let us now contemplate the extent of his agency in thus renewing the hearts of men.

I. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to awaken in men a consciousness of guilt, and to convince them of their need of Divine mercy to renew their hearts and forgive their sins.

Whatever means may be employed to produce this conviction in the consciences of men, and to excite in them alarming apprehensions of future wrath, as the just desert of their sins, there can be no doubt that the work is to be ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as the *efficient* agent. Thus Christ, in speaking of the Holy Ghost, declared to his disciples, "And when he is come, he will reprove (or convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." In preparing the way for their conversion to God, he awakens the careless and stupid, alarms those who are at ease in sin, convicts those of guilt who are "pure in their own eyes," and excites the anxious inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" It was by his influence on the multitude assembled at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, that "they were pricked in their hearts," and were led to inquire of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He strives with the impenitent through the medium of divine truth; and they are represented as resisting his blessed influences.

This work of conviction, previous to the renewal of the heart unto holiness, is calculated to show sinners their guilt and ruin, and their need of a special Divine interposition to save them from deserved wrath; and it prepares them to form a proper estimate of that grace which is manifested in their salvation.

II. It is by the influence of the Holy Ghost that men are regenerated and turned unto God.

We sometimes hear very strange and unguarded expressions concerning the Spirit's influence in regeneration, which, if understood according to their plain obvious meaning, would go the whole length of contradicting the doctrine of the Bible on this subject. It would seem, from some of these expressions, that those who adopt them suppose that God does nothing more towards regenerating sinners than simply to awaken their attention, discover to them their sin and danger, and present to their minds the motives to holy obedience; and that, if they are regenerated at all, it must be merely by their own efforts in view of the motives thus set before them.

Now, the tendency of these and similar statements is, to exclude the agency of the Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration. But this is a point on which the inspired writers are very explicit; and it is difficult to conceive how their language can be misunderstood: "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Those who believe on Christ are said to be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The apostle said to the Romans, "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." And to the Ephesians he used the following language: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great

love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

We need be at no loss concerning the leading idea communicated in these passages. Under whatever circumstances men are regenerated, nothing can be plainer, than that the work is performed by the Spirit of God. He claims the honor of it, as being the efficient agent. It is by his special influences that men are brought to submit themselves to God, and to become his willing and obedient people.

III. God is pleased to make use of divine truth in performing this work of grace.

Such is the fact as represented in the sacred Scriptures. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."—"For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."—"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." God also employs the agency of men in presenting truth to the mind, and enforcing it upon the conscience; and hence the work is sometimes ascribed to human influence, in this subordinate sense. Paul could say to the Corinthian Christians, "For though ye have ten thousand instructers in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel."

It appears, then, that the gospel of Christ, including the whole system of revealed truth, is the appointed *means* of the conversion and salvation of men. As far as we are capable of ascertaining, it is only in connection with divine truth that God is pleased to bring men "out of darkness into his marvellous light." Whatever God may do in the exercise of his wise sovereignty in regenerating individuals who are ignorant of the gospel of Christ, yet we have no knowledge of his performing this work except in connection with his own appointed means.

And we can readily perceive the important influence which divine truth is calculated to exert in connection with this work of the Spirit. It is in view of the truth, clearly presented to the minds of sinners, that they perceive their guilt and ruin; and thus the way is prepared for those operations of the Spirit by which men are "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them." It is in view of divine truth that men perceive the obligations under which they are laid to holy obedience, and the whole array of motives by which they are urged to return to God, and consecrate themselves to his service.

And, besides this, a knowledge of the truth is essential to the exercise of the Christian graces. Whatever may be the work of the Spirit on the heart, it is difficult to conceive how a man can actually love God, unless he has some knowledge of God's character. Without a knowledge of duty and of guilt, it is not seen how there can be any repentance for sin; or how there can be any faith in the Savior without some knowledge of the Savior. Hence we can perceive that an important use is made of divine truth, in connection

with the whole work of the Spirit, in convicting, and converting, and sanctifying men. It is in view of the truth that he excites in their hearts love to God, repentance for sin, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And without some knowledge of the truth, it is not seen how they could exercise these holy affections.

IV. Besides the use that is made of divine truth, in the performance of this great work, the Bible evidently speaks of an additional influence on the part of the Holy Spirit in regenerating men. It speaks of an influence *on the heart*, over and above that which consists in presenting and urging truth upon the conscience.

In proof of such an influence, let us examine a few passages of Scripture. The text seems to be very explicit and conclusive on this point: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Previous to this, the people had enjoyed the means of religious instruction. They were taught their duty, and their guilt as transgressors, and were warned of their danger. Means and motives were employed to reclaim them from sin and induce them to become holy and obedient. And God had granted them his Spirit, to strive with them; but they uniformly resisted the Holy Ghost, and all the means and motives which had been employed to bring them to repentance. But, at the time here alluded to, God would exert a *special* and *additional* influence—a *direct* and *supernatural* influence, on them, which would *secure* their obedience. The reason why they had hitherto resisted the motives to holiness was, they had no love to God in their hearts—no regard for his authority and honor. They took no delight in serving him; they felt no interest in pleasing and honoring him. They were completely under the control of a selfish regard to their own interest and happiness, and supremely bent on the love and pursuit of forbidden objects. And while this state of mind continued, they would revolt more and more, in spite of all the motives placed before them. Now, in order to secure their return to God, and their continuance in the way of holiness, God promises in the text, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

Whatever may be understood by this new heart and new spirit,—whether it means right exercises of the will, or a principle of holy love as the foundation of such exercises, still the influence which is here spoken of seems to be totally distinct and different from the mere influence of means and motives. The idea seems to be, not merely that God will persuade them, by the influence of motives, to be obedient and holy, but that God will *give*, or impart, a *new heart*

and a *new spirit.* According to the plain, obvious meaning of language, this can be nothing less than a *direct influence on the mind.* It is a *special* influence, over and above the mere influence of motives, however plainly presented to the mind, and however forcibly urged upon the conscience. It is a *supernatural* influence, something beyond the stated operations of divine power through the medium of second causes. It is an influence exerted directly on the source of the evil which is to be remedied. God *gives a new heart* and *a new spirit;* and the consequence is, that a new direction is given to all the powers and faculties of the mind, and there is no longer an *inclination* to resist the motives to holy obedience, which had been previously exhibited in vain.

Another passage particularly worthy of notice is found in Deut. xxix., commencing with the second verse: "And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes, in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles; yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." Moses was lamenting the fact, that so many of that generation had failed of being spiritually and savingly benefited by all the kindness which God had shown them. The motives to holiness had been placed before them in the most striking and impressive manner. The whole series of events which they had witnessed in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, was calculated to awaken their attention to spiritual concerns, to remind them of their obligations to God, and to convince them that it was for their highest interest to become his willing and obedient people. Why, then, did they not become obedient and holy? The answer probably will be, it was because of the wickedness and obstinacy of their hearts. Still the question returns, why was it, that, under the influence of the most powerful means and motives, when they saw the power and mercy of God in their deliverance from Egypt, and the terrible effects of God's wrath in the overthrow of their enemies; when they witnessed the awful displays of the Divine majesty on Mount Sinai; when they saw God's vengeance executed upon their rebellious fathers and brethren in the wilderness, while they themselves experienced his preserving and protecting care over them, defending them from their enemies, feeding them with the bread of heaven, and supplying them with water from the stream which followed them through all their journeyings in the desert; when they were so fully instructed in their duty and in the things which belonged to their peace;—why was it that the obstinacy of their hearts was not subdued,—why was it that they were not persuaded to be obedient and holy? "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." He had employed means and motives till it was manifest that this kind of influence was wholly ineffectual to reclaim them. But he had not exerted that direct special

influence on their *hearts*, which would *secure* their obedience,—he had not *given them an heart to perceive*.

See, also, Acts xvi. 14: "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Nothing can be more manifest, from the natural import of the language here used, than that the influence which was exerted on Lydia was a direct influence on her heart. The change which was wrought in her consisted in opening her heart; and this change is ascribed directly and immediately to God. The form of expression and the connection of thought seem absolutely to exclude the supposition that the work was performed merely by the instrumentality of truth, operating as a motive in persuading her to open her heart to receive and obey the Gospel. Her heart was opened under the preaching of the Gospel, and in connection with the exhibition of divine truth; but, so far from its being done simply by the truth as a second or instrumental cause, it seems to have been done preparatory to her attending to the things which were spoken by Paul,—preparatory to her receiving the truth, and her being brought under its holy and genuine influence. It was in consequence of her heart being opened by the Lord, that she attended to what was spoken, so as to be benefited.

Another passage is found in Rom. v. 5: "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." This language most clearly denotes an immediate and direct operation of the Spirit *on the heart*. It seems to imply necessarily that this love is produced in the heart, or communicated to the heart, by a direct influence of the Holy Ghost. To say that there can be no exercise of love without some knowledge of the truth, is doubtless correct. But to infer from this that love is excited in the heart of an unrenewed sinner simply by means of the truth, is an inference which the premises do not warrant, and which is at variance with the plain and obvious import of the language here employed. Doubtless, there can be no actual love to God without a knowledge of his character, so that it is proper to say that this love is exercised in view of the truth, and only in view of the truth. And hence the importance of understanding and believing the truth. But the truth may be known and felt by the sinner without being loved and obeyed by him. He may have a correct view of God's character, and yet remain an enemy to God. According to the language of the apostle, when this enmity is changed to love, it is done by the agency of the Holy Ghost, shedding abroad the love of God in the heart.

There are many other passages which speak of this direct influence on the heart, which it is needless now to mention.

The general argument, as drawn from this source, is briefly this. The Bible teaches us that God employs various means with sinners to reclaim them from sin, and bring them back to the paths of obedience. He instructs them, and warns them, and invites them.

He places before them the most solemn considerations of duty and interest, to persuade them to be reconciled to him. But all this influence has ever proved ineffectual to bring men to repentance. Over and above this influence, in addition to all the means and motives which are employed with men, God is pleased by his own act to *open the heart* to the reception of the truth. He is pleased to *give a new heart and a new spirit, to put his Spirit within them*, and thus *cause* them to walk in his statutes. He actually sheds abroad his love in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them. This influence is very properly styled *direct*, and *special*, and *supernatural*. It is not exerted without the truth, or in the absence of the truth; but always, as far as we can judge, in connection with the truth, and in view of the truth. At the same time, it is an influence which is exerted in addition to all the influence exerted through the instrumentality of the truth. Besides presenting the truth, and enforcing it on the mind and conscience, the Holy Ghost *takes away the stony heart, and gives an heart of flesh*. The Bible makes a plain and palpable distinction between exhibiting light, and giving eyes to see,—between employing the means of instruction and persuasion, and giving a new heart and a new spirit. The former is necessary, according to the established order of divine operation; but without the latter, none are ever converted to God.

The conclusion to which these remarks necessarily conduct us may be supposed, by some, to be attended with serious, and even insurmountable, difficulties. It may be important, therefore, to make a few remarks with particular reference to these difficulties.

1. There is nothing in this kind of influence which the Bible ascribes to the Holy Spirit in regenerating the sinner, that is unphilosophical, or inconsistent with the laws of moral agency.

The doctrine of the Bible is, that God exerts a direct influence on the mind, changing it from a state of rebellion to a state of submission. But it is objected to this, that we cannot conceive how mind can be moved by such an influence. Neither can we conceive whence the wind cometh, and whither it goeth. Most evidently, our ignorance cannot furnish a valid objection to the testimony of God.

Another objection is, that there is no other way than that of the instrumentality of motives for men to exert an influence upon each other. But admitting this to be the fact, does it prove that there is no other way in which *God* can exert an influence upon them? The premises do not warrant any such conclusion. For aught we know, God *may* act upon men in a way very different from what they are capable of acting upon each other. And we know that in some instances this is the fact. There is no way in which men can communicate their thoughts to each other but through the medium of the senses. There is no other way in which they can have access to each other's minds. But God has access *directly* and *immediately* to their minds, aside from the instrumentality or medium of their senses, as in the case of inspiration. In communicating ideas to their minds by inspiration, or immediate suggestion, there

by sincere repentance. Hence it is easy to perceive, that so far from forming an excuse for the sinner, it is the very thing which constitutes his guilt.

4. It is of great importance that the doctrine of the Spirit's influence in regeneration should be frequently and fully brought to view.

It can hardly be necessary to remark, that in all attempts to promote the conversion of men, they must be fully instructed in their duty, and be urged by all the considerations of duty and interest to the practice of holiness. They must be taught that it is their indispensable and immediate duty to return to God by repentance, and become holy in heart and life.

And it is equally important that the great doctrines of revelation should be presented, and explained, and urged, because they furnish the only correct principles of moral conduct. The doctrine of the Spirit's influence in regeneration, as presented in the Bible, is the only solid ground of hope concerning our dying world. Let the gospel be preached in its purity—let the appointed means of grace be employed ever so diligently and perseveringly, still, without the blessed influences of the Spirit none will be converted to God. Though Paul plant and Apollos water, unless God grants the quickening and renewing influences of his Spirit, there will be no increase. And we have no reason to expect his influences, any further than we honor him as the exclusive agent in giving "a new heart and a new spirit."

The faithful and devoted minister derives from this doctrine his principal encouragement to labor, and the only well-grounded hope of success. He will, therefore, find it peculiarly profitable to his own soul to ponder much upon it in his study, and to have it deeply engraven on his heart. It will sustain him under all his spiritual conflicts, and cheer and animate him in his efforts. And he will find it profitable also to spread it out to the view of his people. The direct tendency of it is, to preserve Christians from spiritual pride, and to excite them to that fervent, believing prayer which is the means of bringing down the best of Heaven's blessings upon our guilty race. And it will stimulate them also to diligence and perseverance in laboring for the conversion of their fellow-men; because it holds out the only encouragement for Christian effort.

Let it, then, have its proper place and its due share of attention in our ministrations—let it be presented in all its practical bearings, as it is presented in the Bible; and we need not fear the result. If some should abuse and pervert it to their own destruction; the same may be said of every precious truth of revelation. God has owned and blessed it, to the salvation of vast multitudes in times that are past; and we have no reason to doubt that he will own and bless it in times to come. But let this doctrine be obscured and blotted out,—let the Holy Ghost be no longer openly and heartily acknowledged as the exclusive agent in shedding abroad the love of God in the hearts of fallen men, and we may write upon the gates of Zion—"The glory of our God is departed."

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SERMON CXLVII.

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PURIFICATION OF THE SACRED MINISTRY.

Malachi iii. 3, 4.—*And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.*

The text is one of the many prophecies which have a peculiar reference to New Testament times. It announces what will be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the Millennium. The Christian ministry will be purified, that they may offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness. The subject will lead us to inquire,

I. What are some of the corruptions from which the sons of Levi will be purified at the commencement of Millennial glory?

1. They will be purified from every species of gross *immoralities*. In some ages and nations, even those who minister in holy things have been the subjects and the promoters of abominations the most gross.

A large portion of the Roman Catholic clergy were, at the era of the Reformation, personally and professionally, in secret and in broad day, the perpetrators of almost every crime. Nor is there any portion of the church, established or dissenting, which has not at times had men officiating at their altars, and sometimes standing high in popular estimation, who were living in the practice of iniquities which cannot be named; and even in our own day, intemperance in eating and drinking has marred the usefulness, and destroyed the lives of many in the ministry who were men of talents and extensive influence. But no such stain will adhere to the character of those who shall be the honored instruments of proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation in the purity and glory of the latter days.

2. The Divine appointment, with respect to the ministry of reconciliation, both under the old and new dispensation, was, that those, who should be thus employed should be at a great distance from all secular concerns. But this is

very far from having been the case hitherto. Even a pope of the last century could say to a young priest embarking for America, "May the Lord in his goodness save you from the temptation and the curse of attempting to get rich." There have been and now are in the United States (as well as in other countries less favored with spiritual privileges) many professedly devoted to the ministry in holy things, and yet almost exclusively employed in concerns purely worldly. They own and manage plantations—they have their attention almost wholly engaged from Monday morning to Saturday night—about crops, and various kinds of cattle, and servants and merchandise. Some are deeply engaged in commercial speculations, and in political discussions; and there has been such a thing as a minister of the gospel being a contractor for carrying the mail and for managing the post-office establishment, even on the Sabbath-day. But such things will not be known when the sons of Levi are purified.

3. The ministry, according to the Divine directions, are to give themselves to reading and studying; but their time, and their talents, and their literary acquirements are to be the *Lord's property*, and are all to be devoted to the development and to the application of God's great plan of salvation. And there is ample scope here for the movement of the most exalted and improved intellect. Yet the history of the church, particularly since the era of the Reformation, is full of the accounts of sacred time and talent being employed about almost every thing else, rather than Divine things. Protestant Germany, during the greater part of the last century, and many of the residences of the English clergy during the same period, have furnished a vast quantity of learned lore, which in the furnace of the refiner will be ascertained to have been dross, or base and hurtful metal. An awful waste of talent—a most criminal perversion of the sacred office.

4. The mere *polite* and *fashionable* preacher and pastor shall have no place among the sons of Levi, when Jehovah shall sit as a refiner. The approved guardian of immortal souls and of Christian morals will then have a more effectual way of recommending himself and his Master to the young and to the gay, and to families in easy circumstances, than by being skilled in vocal or instrumental music, (good acquirements!) or by being always prepared to give an opinion on the latest work of fiction, or by being the most expert and entertaining in a party of pleasure. Yet preachers and pastors of this character have been in some places highly esteemed for their works' sake!

5. Ever since the days of the Apostles, there have been, as there were in the Corinthian church, *divisions and schisms* among the professed followers of the Redeemer;—but these could never have been continued, had they not been cherished in some form or other by the ministry. Some Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Diotrophes has always been the rallying name of a party influence in almost every generation and every district. This is peculiarly so at the present day. Among the six thousand preachers of the gospel in these United States, it is a melancholy fact, that there is so little ministerial confidence; and in many cases this want of confidence is most evident among those of the same denomination, and living in the same neighborhood. Hence slander and evil speaking in all their disgraceful forms exist in some places, even among commissioned servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. This certainly will not be the state of things at the commencement of the Millennium, when God *will make* his new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of *Judah, and put his laws* in their minds and write them in their hearts; the *great law of love*—of love to God and love to man—will be written very legi-

bly upon the hearts of those, whose special business it is to explain and enforce this law.

It is truly melancholy to think of the envies and jealousies which, in family and private and neighborhood intercourse, mark almost every moment and every action of some of those who are set to watch for souls. And it is still more melancholy to cast an eye over the length and breadth of the land, and to witness the amazing waste of ministerial talent and of ministerial effort and even of ministerial piety, in brother opposing brother in their efforts to do good, and to advance the interests of Messiah's kingdom. Such a state of things can never be consistent with Millennial purity and glory. By some means or other, the sons of Levi as a body will, at the commencement of that period, be purified from all that pride, and selfishness, and meanness, and malignity, and folly which at present form a prominent feature in not a few who minister in holy things, and who might otherwise be eminently qualified for the great and good work.

A full review of the corruptions of the Christian ministry would suggest,

1. Proofs almost without number of the depravity of human nature,—of the deceitfulness of the human heart,—and of the absolute necessity of the special influences of the Holy Spirit.

2. That the preservation of the church from age to age is nothing less than a standing miracle,—a special illustration of the promise, "Upon this Rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

3. That while any of these corruptions are cherished to any great extent by those who are invested with the sacred office, the iniquities of the fathers will in some way or other be visited upon their children. See Matt. xxiii. 34.

II. Let us consider, then, the importance and necessity of this purification.

1. Man has always been more or less under the influence of religion. He is by his very nature, in this sense, a religious being. Hence all nations and tribes have had their ministers of religion. And with very few exceptions every individual, in every age, and in every state of society, and among all classes of men, has readily acknowledged its infinite importance.

2. The ministers of religion have always, to a great extent, given character to the community. In the whole history of the Christian ministry particularly, the state of morals, and piety, and literature, has always corresponded with the personal character of the body of the officiating clergy; and from the very nature of things, and from the whole structure of society, the attainments of any considerable portion of the Christian community, in any thing that is valuable, can never exceed the attainments of their spiritual guides. "Like priest, like people," has always been, and always will be a self-evident proposition. Hence it follows, that nothing of that purity and peace, and high intellectual and moral character, which have always been expected to form the distinguishing glory of the Millennium, can ever be realized, till the ministry of reconciliation as a body shall be eminent in every Christian gift and grace.

3. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its enlightening, regenerating, and sanctifying influence, is the last and the only hope of our ruined world. All the devices of men, under pagan, and Mahomedan, and Christian, and infidel forms, have been fully tried; and they have all failed, and been found inadequate. And the wise and reflecting of almost every land are now fully convinced of this.

4. *The institutions* of the gospel are all, in their nature, well adapted for

elevating human character, and promoting human happiness. And when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (and not till then), there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; that is, all round the globe.

5. The institutions of the gospel are one great whole; but a living and properly qualified ministry is the great and important institution. The living ministry is that, which is, with God's blessing, to give life and efficiency to the whole.

6. Of the many thousand accusations and objections which have been brought against the preachers of the gospel individually, and as a body, not one has ever been urged against the true Scriptural character of a gospel ministry. All these accusations and objections go upon the supposition that the ministry or the individual is not consistent with the Christian standard. And it must be acknowledged that much occasion has been given for many of these charges. But let the sons of Levi be purified—let them as a body present themselves in their true and proper character, and they will act in the moral world, as the rain, and the dew, and the sun, and the thunder do in the natural world. Their heavenly authority and their value to the world will be no longer even a matter of doubt.

Let us consider,

III. The means by which this purification of the ministry will be accomplished.

1. It is very probable that there will be some visible and awful dispensation of Providence made to bear directly on this point. The language used in the text and context is exceedingly strong. Read the whole passage (1–5). Compare this passage with some other passages, such as Ezekiel viii. 7–18, and ix. 5, 6; Zechariah xi. 15–17, and xiv. 12; Rev. xix. 19–21; the cases of Nadab and Abihu, Numbers x. 1, 2. and of Eli's sons, 1. Sam. ii. and iii., may also be studied in this connection.

It is evident that the period for the full accomplishment of the declaration in the text is at no great distance. Less, perhaps, than one generation from this date. All acknowledge that the judgments of Jehovah are to fall very heavy upon the kingdoms of the world, and upon Antichrist in all his forms, in order to usher in the purity and the glory of the latter days. It is not therefore probable, that the individuals who have been leaders in the corruptions which have debased the Christian ministry, will escape this visitation.

In what particular form this visitation may be made, we cannot even conjecture. Every attentive reader of ecclesiastical history may however find examples of visitations of this kind in almost every Christian land, and in every generation; and the man who has been conversant with the lives and characters of preachers for thirty or forty years, may find from personal observation a considerable number of illustrations of the principle. It is not to be denied, that even in the United States, this goodly heritage of Zion, a large portion of the present preachers and pastors, are lamentably deficient. They have their legal standing among the sons of Levi, but give too little evidence of possessing the real spirit of their office. Let such be warned of their danger. The day of visitation is at hand.

2. But the great and effectual means of this purification will be, a general and powerful effusion of the Holy Ghost on the rising generation. The brethren and fathers now in the sacred office, whether qualified or unqualified, whether they have been faithful or unfaithful, will soon go the way of all the

earth; and their places will be filled by men of another generation and of a superior character. The same Holy Spirit that rested in such rich abundance upon the Head, while he was personally ministering on earth (See Isa. xi. 1–9, and lxi. 1–5), will descend and abide without measure, when compared with any thing we have witnessed, upon all the members. Under such an influence, another and a continued pentecost will be enjoyed. All who shall be employed in the work of the ministry will of course understand and feel the importance of Divine truth in all its fulness and in all its varied applications, to an extent perhaps far beyond what even apostles enjoyed. See Jeremiah xxxi. 31–34; Isa. xxx. 26; Zechariah xii. 8. They will particularly understand and feel the value of immortal souls, and the suitableness of God's plan of salvation, and the suitableness of all the means which God hath appointed for applying this salvation to our fallen race. They will further be men who will be exclusively devoted to their proper work. They will understand fully the epistles to Timothy and Titus, and the other passages of Scripture describing the nature and the importance of the sacred office. Add to all this, they will be men of ardent piety, and will, generally, have every ministerial and Christian gift and grace on all occasions in lively exercise. And one of their distinguishing characteristics, as men of ardent piety, will no doubt be, that while they shall stand high as men of literature and science, they will possess the happy art of making all their attainments subservient to the salvation and edification of immortal souls. All that may be found valuable in the whole range of human investigation will thus be made to bear upon the development and application of Jehovah's great plan.

And though the preachers of the gospel will then be greatly multiplied, and though their field of operation will be greatly extended, far beyond any thing of any former period, yet there will be also a unity and a harmony of thinking and of feeling, and particularly a unity and harmony of action, equally beyond all that has ever yet been witnessed. This unity will be produced by the powerful operation of God's Spirit upon the understanding, and upon the heart and conscience. Isa. lii. 7, 8. Hence it will be of a very different kind from any thing which has been called by that name under any human arrangements. It will be decidedly the work of God, and will carry along with it its own evidence. It will be the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, and with forbearing one another in love.

There are a great variety of circumstances, as well as some passages of Scripture, which are favorable to the belief, that the movements of Providence in bringing in the glory of the latter day, will be uncommonly rapid, and will far exceed the ordinary march of history. (See Isaiah lxv. 24, and lxvi. 8–19, 20, Zechariah xii. 6–8, Malachi iii. 5.)

It is also extremely probable, that our Lord and Master will, by the dispensations of his providence, and by the operations of his Holy Spirit, provide a generation of servants of this elevated character, at the same time, in nearly all the nations of the earth; and having stationed each company and each man in his proper place, the word of command will be given. And then the advance will be made in united and solid columns upon every point in every line of the fortifications of the enemy and usurper. Then will be completely fulfilled that which was spoken—"The Lord gave the word, and great shall be the company of those that publish it." And at that very moment also, the shout of victory will be raised all *round the globe*, "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Hence, in conclusion, we may infer that there never was any former period in the history of the world, in which there was such encouragement for young men of piety, and talent, and enterprise, to devote themselves to the work of the ministry, as there is at present; nor was there ever any former period in which there was greater encouragement to good people of every name, and of every land and nation, to contribute liberally for aiding pious young men in a course of preparation for this great and good work. The sound is already heard in nearly every land,—"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised or the unclean."

SERMON CXLVIII.

Delivered in the city of New-York, at the ordination of Leonard Woods, jun., May 12, 1833.

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APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

Acts xx. 17–21, 25–27.—*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears, and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:—how I kept back nothing that was profitable, but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I know, that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

This passage of Scripture exhibits an example peculiarly worthy of imitation. The apostle preached in Ephesus three years. His labors were great and constant. *He ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears. He declared all the counsel of God.* And his labors were not in vain. While he planted and watered, God gave the increase. Many souls were converted. There was, emphatically, a *revival of religion.*

The present day is, in a most remarkable degree, a day of *salvation.* God is showing the riches of his grace in reviving his work, and enlarging the church. And, as we have reason to hope that he will carry on his work more and more gloriously, till the whole earth shall see his salvation, it becomes a most interesting question, especially to ministers, how they may most successfully co-operate with God in advancing his kingdom. We know it pleases God to save sinners, through the efforts of men devoted to his service. He *allows us the high honor* of being employed in turning sinners from darkness *to light, and training* them for the kingdom of heaven. We should, therefore,

endeavor to form just conceptions of the nature and extent of the work devolved upon us, in the economy of redemption; so that we may keep our proper place, neglecting nothing which comes within our province, and confiding wholly in God, as to every thing which appropriately belongs to the sphere of his agency. What *we* are called to do, is perfectly clear from the instructions God has given. And it is equally clear what is the work which peculiarly belongs to Him. *Our* work is one adapted to the attributes of our minds, and to the *dependent* and *limited* agency which we are capable of exerting. The peculiar work of GOD is a work suited to *His infinite perfections*, —a work which is entirely distinct from our agency, and entirely beyond it,— though frequently conjoined with it. To give efficacy to the truth, to renew the heart, is *His* work *exclusively*. Our preaching has, of itself, no power to accomplish it, either in whole or in part. In the natural world, the work of planting and cultivation is assigned to us. But who does not see, that the vegetation and growth of corn is effected by a cause entirely distinct from our agency? The highest exertion of the power which belongs to us cannot *cause* the earth to bring forth fruit. We do not even know *how* the effect is produced; so that if we do in fact put forth that agency which truly causes the vegetation and growth of corn, we do it ignorantly. By such a case as this the apostle illustrates the agency which the servants of Christ have in the conversion of sinners, and the peculiar agency which *God* has. *Our* appropriate work is the same as the work which Paul performed at Ephesus, where he preached the unsearchable riches of Christ,—where he labored three years, by faithful instruction, and earnest, affectionate exhortation, to bring sinners to repentance. And God's work is the same now, as that which he accomplished among the Ephesians, when he effectually enlightened the eyes of their understanding, and by giving spiritual life to those who were dead in sin, made known the exceeding greatness of his power.

But I propose, in this discourse, to confine my remarks to a single question: *What is the preaching best suited to promote the conversion of sinners, and the building up of Christ's church?*

Among the *general* characteristics of the preaching which is adapted to promote these great objects, the following are of special importance:—

First: It must be *Scriptural*. I do not say merely that it must contain no principles *contrary* to the word of God; but that it must exhibit fully the very truths which are exhibited in his word, and *as* they are exhibited in his word. How did Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, when so many were converted? Just examine. About half his sermon, as recorded by the sacred historian, was made up of texts quoted from the Bible, and the other half of plain reasoning from those texts, and a pungent application to his hearers of the truth, thus drawn from the word of God. And who ever delivered a better sermon, or one more successful? What we preach should be *derived from the Bible*;—derived *directly* and *manifestly*. The more evident we make it that our preaching is scriptural, the higher authority do we give it, and the deeper the impression it is likely to make. Away, then, with all the speculations of man, the offspring of human imagination, or mere human reason. We go out of our place, if we attempt to say any thing on the great subjects of Christianity, except what we learn from the Scriptures. If we would honor God, and secure that influence of his Spirit which alone gives efficacy to our labors, we must preach *his word, and nothing else*. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. *It is the instrument* which the Holy Spirit uses in converting

sinners and sanctifying believers; and it is the instrument we must use, if we would not disobey God, and labor in vain. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee," saith the Lord.

Secondly: Preaching must be *plain* and *intelligible*. A considerable part of our public assemblies are youth and children. And the principal part of those farther advanced in years, have but little time and few advantages for the cultivation of their minds. Now there is a great deal in the common strain of preaching which is utterly useless to the bulk of the people, because *it is not understood*. There is something in the words employed, something in the structure of the sentences, in the propositions, arguments, and illustrations, which greatly obscures the sense, if it does not wholly conceal it. If we would profit our hearers, we must make every thing plain. Even when we *reason* on the subject of religion, we must make our arguments *plain*:—*strong* and *conclusive* they must indeed be, but still *plain*, *clear*,—so that every one who hears may feel the force of our reasoning.

Thirdly: Our preaching must be characterized by *earnestness*. Nothing on earth is so important as religion. The salvation of the immortal soul, the success of the gospel, the reign of Christ, the eternal glory of God; these are objects which infinitely outweigh all the interests of time. If, then, earnestness is called for anywhere, it is here. If any thing in the universe should excite the full ardor of our minds, it is the message we bring to an assembly of immortals. If we deliver it with sluggish feelings, we are chargeable with an inconsistency which must be seen by all men, but the evils of which no language can describe. God commands us to be in earnest. *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord.* And dare we engage in a work which demands the fervor of angels, with a cold, unfeeling heart? Indeed, a higher, far higher degree of pious fervor and earnestness, pervading our prayers, our preaching, and all our labors, seems to be one of the chief things now called for, in order to the universal prevalence of religion. If ministers should come to possess a holy earnestness, corresponding with the importance of their work, their success might, with the blessing of God, be increased a hundred-fold. Let these vast objects, then, my brethren,—the honor of God our Savior, the spread of the Gospel, the redemption of souls from death, and the incorruptible glories of heaven,—more powerfully move our hearts, and rouse us to greater, far greater earnestness.

I might mention other general characteristics of preaching, as really important as those I have specified; such as *tenderness*, *boldness*, *discretion*, *fidelity*, &c. But I can only name these; as the plan of discourse which I have contemplated will lead me to dwell upon other views of the subject.

We may, then, I think, be much assisted in forming definite and satisfactory ideas of the best kind of preaching, by a careful attention to the particular *ends* of preaching; or the particular points of light in which the great end of preaching may be considered.

The great end of preaching is *to promote true religion, in distinction from that which is false.* False religion exhibits itself in an endless variety of forms, all of them agreeing in one way or another with the feelings of the unrenewed heart. Mankind are exceedingly prone to fall in with some scheme of error; and if the doctrines they receive are right, they are still inclined to satisfy themselves with false or defective experiences. Awakened sinners, *so long as they continue* unrenewed, are always in danger of indulging delusive *affections. Multitudes* rest in a spurious conversion, which leaves them the

servants of sin, and heirs of perdition. It is no easy thing to preserve men from false religion. What I now say is true at all times, and particularly in a revival. When the Spirit of God specially exerts his power, the enemy will to the utmost exert *his* power. He will strive to get access to the field where the wheat is sown, and there, among the wheat, to sow tares. When the rain moistens the earth, and the sun warms it, and the wheat springs up and grows, the tares will grow also. Thus Jesus taught his disciples. While we strive then with all our hearts to promote true religion, let us never forget that men are greatly exposed to *delusion;* and surely the promotion of *this* can be no part of our proper work. This is the work of the enemy. Should our preaching be the means of ten thousand spurious conversions, and should we bring ten thousand mere pretenders to piety into the church, it would do no good either to them, or to the church, but be imminently dangerous to both. In our preaching, then, we must constantly aim to promote true religion, in distinction from false; and for this purpose we must make the distinction between true and false religion very apparent. We must show clearly what false religion is, and in how many ways men are exposed to it: we must guard our hearers against its seductive influence; must beseech them and warn them to avoid it as ruinous to the soul; must follow them through all their dark retreats with the lamp of divine truth; must lay open the windings of the deceitful heart, and sweep away all the refuges of lies. We must make this a great object both in revivals and at other times, always remembering that by guarding men against delusion, we do that which is highly important to them, and well-pleasing in the sight of God.

Thus much as to false religion. True religion is holiness. To promote holiness, we must clearly describe the *nature* of holiness, as consisting essentially in right affections or dispositions of heart. We must exhibit the objects of these affections, the glorious character of God and of Christ,—the divine law and the divine kingdom,—man as rational, accountable, and immortal,—and other objects set forth in the Scriptures. We must hold forth in all their variety and weight the motives to holy affection; and by these must rouse the dormant energies of conscience, and touch the feelings of the heart.

One of the primary requisites in true religion is *conviction of sin.* All Christians have it. It results from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, which gives just apprehensions of our duty and of our real character. It is necessary even in case of a sudden conversion. Those who were converted on the day of Pentecost were deeply convinced of sin.

Repentance is a prominent part of true religion; and our preaching must be suited to promote it. In order to this, it is not sufficient to tell sinners that they *ought* to repent; and ought to repent *now.* We must show what repentance is,—not mere sorrow for sin, nor any moving of the natural sensibilities in view of the consequences of sin,—but *actual turning from sin;*—not merely *resolving* to repent,—for resolving to do a thing is not doing it. We must show that repentance is being grieved for sin as committed against God, and really forsaking it,—ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well. We must exhibit the present and unceasing duty of all men to repent, and must earnestly urge them to an immediate compliance with this high obligation by the motives which the Scriptures furnish.

Another essential element, indeed the groundwork of all evangelical religion, is *faith in Christ.* But we are far from accomplishing our work as ministers of the Gospel, when we merely reiterate the exhortation and command, to

believe in the Lord Jesus, and to believe at the present time. We must prepare sinners to feel the *necessity* of believing in Christ for salvation, by holding up the divine law as perfect and immutable; and so convincing them that they are sinners without excuse, utterly lost, and without any prospect of being saved by their own doings. We must present Christ as the object of faith, the only Savior, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. We must exhibit him as the great and perfect sacrifice for sin. We must set him forth in all his offices; must describe the glories of his character, the riches of his grace, his suitableness and all-sufficiency, and the spiritual blessings which he bestows. Unless we thus set forth the depraved, guilty, ruined state of sinners, and unless we thus preach Christ crucified, we do not prepare the way for the exercise of an enlightened, evangelical faith. And without such a faith, there is no true religion. If we would copy the example of the apostles, and most effectually promote the good of the church, we must not rest with occasionally adverting to the Savior. We must first of all preach Christ crucified; must dwell upon his character and work; must show that he is able to save to the uttermost; that there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus. It must be a great object with us to glorify the Son of God; to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to perishing sinners. We must fully set Him forth as the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe; and must prove, to demonstration, that there is no ray of hope for any child of Adam, except what beams from the cross.

I might proceed to mention humility, love, obedience, self-denial, prayer, &c. and show what kind of preaching is adapted to promote these parts of religion. But I must pass to another point.

Our preaching must be such as to promote *a religion which is complete in all its parts.* If there could be such a thing as the existence of one part of religion without the others—for example, if there could be love without repentance, zeal without humility, or hope without faith,—it would be a dreadful deformity, and would deprive religion of more than half its happy influence. But although it is impossible that any one part of religion should exist in the soul, without implying the existence of other parts, yet it often happens that Christians *exhibit* some parts in much smaller proportions than they do others. Their religion wants symmetry. Some have a large measure of the sympathetic and social affections, but are deficient in those which are more spiritual. Some are full of hope and joy, but are deficient in conviction of sin, and in humbleness and brokenness of heart. Again, some are alive and active in the more public duties of religion, but are comparatively cold and dead in the exercises of secret devotion, and the duties of private life. In these and other ways men show the want of symmetry in their religion. This fact is doubtless owing in part to some fault in our public instructions. Many preachers have certain favorite topics. They confine themselves to a part, and perhaps to a very small part of the grand system of divine truth. They do not take large and comprehensive views of the Christian religion as a whole. They do not *study* the whole. Of course their preaching is not adapted to promote a religion which is well proportioned and complete. Such a religion pervades all the faculties of the mind; excites to steady action all the moral sensibilities; and diffuses its sanctifying influence over the whole character and life. And those who are the subjects of it grow up to the full stature of perfect men in Christ. To produce this noble and happy effect, we must apply ourselves

diligently to the study of the Christian religion, as set forth in the Scriptures, and furnish our minds with a correct knowledge of its several parts, and of the whole; and then we must *preach* the whole. This is an arduous work; a very different thing from preaching a little circle of discourses on a few favorite subjects. "*The priest's lips should keep knowledge;*" and the knowledge we ought to obtain is like a gold-mine, that lies deep, and cannot be reached without long-continued toil. To understand the mighty range of divine truth, and to be able properly to teach it, requires great mental labor. It requires a habit of intense, patient study. It requires that we lay in large stores of sacred knowledge, and be continually augmenting them, so that we may be like the householder, who brought forth out of his treasure things new and old.

But you may ask, especially, *What is the kind of preaching that is necessary to promote a revival of religion?* To this important question, I reply; religion is of the same nature in a revival as at other times. Consequently, the preaching which is suited to promote religion in a revival, is for substance the same as that which is suited to promote it at other times. The heart of man is the same; the character, the purposes, and the law of God the same; the gospel the same; the way of salvation, the necessity of being renewed by the Spirit, the nature of repentance, faith, and obedience the same. The only difference is, that in a revival all these things are seen in a clearer light, and contemplated with deeper and livelier emotions. Evidently, then, in order to meet the exigencies of a revival, we have only to exhibit these great subjects with special plainness, fidelity, and earnestness. And yet, supposing the season of revival to be of no more than the usual length, there must evidently be *a selection of subjects.* And a selection may be made, which will be specially adapted to such a season: that is, specially adapted to promote the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the rapid spiritual growth of believers. In my view, however, this selection should have a much larger compass than it commonly has. If I mistake not, the subjects introduced in a revival are in many instances confined within such narrow limits, that those who become real converts lose many precious benefits which they might enjoy, if their minds were, at that interesting period, furnished with a larger extent of evangelical knowledge. I would by no means undertake to give a complete list of the subjects proper to be brought forward in a revival of religion. I feel myself incompetent to this. Besides, the peculiar character and circumstances of the people in one place may render it expedient to take a different range of subjects, and a different mode of treating them, from what would be best in another place. But while I would decline the task of enumerating all the subjects which should be introduced in a revival, or of prescribing any one manner of treating them, exclusively of others, I must enter my solemn protest against the opinion, that any of the great doctrines or duties of Christianity are unsuitable in a revival. Paul declared all the counsel of God; and he declared it in times of revival. And we learn from his epistles what he considered the counsel of God to be. My dear brethren, God has not left it to us to make out, by our own reasoning, what the doctrines of religion are, nor to determine, by our own policy, which of these doctrines shall be preached, and which shall be passed over in silence. Our commission is, to preach the word of God. We must use all the powers of our minds to ascertain the meaning of God's word, and to present that meaning in the clearest light. But God never intended that it should *be left to our* discretion to preach or not preach the doctrines of reve-

lation. As Protestants, and as Christians, we profess to believe that the BIBLE, with all it contains, was intended for use. To say that any doctrines of the Bible are unfit to be preached in a revival, is to make ourselves wiser than God. For, by the publication of His word, He plainly signifies that He regards all its doctrines as proper to be publicly taught, and as adapted to do good to the souls of men. Guided by wisdom from above, we are faithfully to explain and inculcate the great truths of revelation, and to present them in the best order we can. But to exclude or conceal any of them as not proper to be preached,—what is it but to act the part of Papists and infidels?

I wish there were no occasion for these remarks. But are there not some, who show great zeal for the conversion of sinners, but who think that certain doctrines, which they admit to be doctrines of the Bible, particularly the doctrines of election and divine sovereignty, and the special influence of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, should never be preached, certainly not in a revival of religion? I cannot now discuss such a subject as this. But I would just inquire,—how keeping back these truths in *preaching* can answer the purpose intended, seeing the hearers have the Bible, and will not fail to find the doctrines there. When the Holy Spirit is poured out, and sinners are excited to attend to the concerns of their souls, one of the first things they will do is to search the Scriptures. If we are faithful, we shall exhort them to do this, and to do it with great seriousness and docility, and to receive what they find in the Bible as the truth of God. Now if they follow our advice, and give themselves to the reading of the Scriptures, as they ought, they will soon come to passages which teach the doctrines of election and divine sovereignty, and the special influence of the Spirit.

If, then, we withhold these doctrines in a revival, as being unsuitable to be preached, and as of hurtful tendency in relation to the work of God's Spirit, to be consistent, we must exhort our hearers to take care, when they read the Scriptures, to pass by those places which contain such doctrines; or, to make it surer still, must have an expurgated edition of the Bible, in which the passages referred to shall all be omitted.

My present position is, that we should make it our object in preaching to promote true religion *in all its parts;* and in order to this, exhibit *all parts* of Divine *truth;* and exhibit them, as far as may be, in the manner and proportion in which they are exhibited in the word of God. I maintain, that the system of doctrines contained in the Bible is adapted to produce the very best effect; that man in his present state requires the influence of *all* these doctrines, as the means of giving him a *completely renovated character;* that if any of them are omitted, and a religious character is formed *without* their influence, it will want *symmetry and completeness.* I maintain, in short, that the whole range of gospel doctrines must be used to promote the beauty, the strength, and the growth of the new man; and that if only a partial view is taken of Divine truth, the religion of converts, yes, of real converts, and of ministers too, will have something weak and sickly, or out of proportion. That religious experience is best which takes place under the combined influence of all the grand doctrines of revelation; and any one who has this experience, will need no array of arguments to prove the truth or consistency of all the doctrines of revelation. His *experience* demonstrates both their truth and their *consistency.* These doctrines are designed for sanctification; and he finds *that every one of them* has a sanctifying effect. His heart had various disorders, *and their complete* cure required the influence of every one of these heavenly

truths:—one for this purpose, another for that. Look to those Christians whose faith in the doctrines of the Bible is defective, leaving out a part; and you will undoubtedly discover a corresponding defect in their religious character. You will find some of the ingredients of moral excellence wanting. What are *we*, then, that we should be wiser than God? What are *we*, that we should think ourselves competent, by our philosophy or our policy, to mend his holy word? By attempting to do this, we shall certainly hinder or mar the work of God's Holy Spirit.

But I have still another remark, namely—that the object of preaching is to promote a religion which shall be *solid and permanent*. There is a religion like the seed which fell on stony places, and which sprung up very quick, but soon withered away, because it had no depth of earth. The very reason why it sprung up so quick was, that it had no depth of earth. Far be it from us to countenance any thing like this. For what is that religion worth, which is like the transient mist of morning.

I say, then, we must constantly aim to promote a religion which is *solid and permanent*. And what is the kind of preaching suited to do this? In reply to this question I can only venture a few remarks, involving the principles on which I think a proper answer must depend.

It is a well known fact, that we are susceptible of various emotions which have no necessary connection with *character*. Persons may be strongly and tenderly moved by fictitious scenes of distress; but what connection have these strong and tender emotions with their principles of action? None at all. They are common to the good and the bad; to the humane and the hard-hearted. How many can weep at imaginary distress who are unmoved at the reality of suffering, however great! Their emotions, though highly raised, involve *no active principle*,—nothing which is solid or lasting in character. It is the same as to our spiritual interests. We may so present the things of religion, as to excite various emotions of fear and hope, grief and joy, gratitude and love; and these emotions may be very strong; and yet they may all be of a temporary, transient nature, having nothing to do with religious character. The sacred writers often refer to these superficial and transient emotions, and warn us against their deceptive influence. I do not mean to signify that emotions of this kind are in themselves wrong. In their place they are right, and are doubtless designed for important purposes, just as all our animal appetites and animal susceptibilities are. But they are not *religion*. They do not contain the elements of religion. Let me not be understood to complain of these transient emotions on account of their being too *highly raised*. What I mean to say is, *they are not of the right* KIND. They are, in their nature, below the holy standard of religion. They are, indeed, but little superior to the instinctive feelings visible in mere animals; whereas, the affections which we ought to have, are those which will bring us into alliance with the inhabitants of heaven, and fit us for the employments of heaven. Now there is a manner of speaking on religious subjects; and there is a manner of treating the concerns of religion, which is calculated merely or chiefly to excite that class of emotions which I have described—superficial, transient, animal emotions, nowise connected with character, and infinitely below the spiritual and exalted nature of true religion.

It is one of the inquiries which I feel it a sacred duty to make respecting any means used for the conversion of sinners and the prosperity of the church—*Whether Christ appointed them, and his apostles employed them*; or, whether

they are additions to the simple institutions of the gospel? Respecting this or that mode of preaching, I inquire,—is it like the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost? Is it like the preaching of Paul? Is there reason to think that either Christ, or the apostles, preached in such a manner and for such a purpose? We may, perhaps, be inclined to say that we have attained to superior light. In the warmth of our zeal we may become tired of attempting to convert the world by the mere preaching of the gospel in the manner of the inspired teachers, and by seeking the influence of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to repentance. We may indulge the thought that we have made great improvements upon primitive preaching, and that Christ and his apostles might have had much greater success in converting men, had they known what we know at the present day. And we may imagine that we can drive on the work of saving sinners faster than can be done by the plain, humble, simple method prescribed in the word of God. On this subject, involving the eternal welfare of souls, I would speak with all seriousness, and with the utmost tenderness. But I cannot help thinking that the introduction of any mode of preaching or any means for converting sinners, essentially different in its nature and tendency from those which are sanctioned by the example of Christ and the apostles, is a manifest departure from the commission God has given us. Indeed, it is a manifest violation of the principles for which Protestants have contended in opposition to the church of Rome. What is the grand objection which our fathers made, and which we make, against Popish rites and ceremonies? It is this:—They are an essential departure from the simplicity of the gospel. They are additions to the Divine institution. They are human inventions—of the nature of those "commandments of men" which Christ everywhere reprobated. Now, for us to adopt any thing of this kind would plainly imply that we look upon the simple, unostentatious institutions of the New Testament, as defective, and verily think that some additions, devised by human wisdom, are necessary to produce the best effect.

All such additions, suggested by mere human policy, are a dishonor to the great author and finisher of our faith. He knew what was in man. He knew human nature *perfectly;* and gave us a system of doctrines, precepts, and promises, and prescribed means of conversion and sanctification, perfectly suited to mankind in all ages. And it is a fact, that where the doctrines and institutions of Christianity have been guarded with the greatest jealousy, and kept most free from human admixtures, there religion has been most pure and most prosperous. But as soon as ministers have begun, in any place, to depart from the simplicity of the gospel, and to introduce their own inventions, either as to doctrine or practice, there the church has been gradually corrupted, and there religion has declined.

I must, therefore, conscientiously object to any means for the promotion of religion, which are not evidently authorized by Christ and his apostles. And one of my reasons is—it would be a virtual impeachment of the wisdom of Christ; as it would imply that he had failed to give us a perfect system of means, and that what he intended for universal and perpetual use in his church needs some amendment. Another ground of objection with me, is, that it would open the door to endless additions and corruptions. If one is at liberty, as his own inclination or fancy may dictate, to adopt means not authorized by the Scriptures, because he happens to think them better adapted to convert *men than scriptural means*; another may adopt other means; and so the door *will be open for endless* changes in the means of promoting the salvation of

men; and by-and-by we may perhaps set aside the BIBLE ITSELF, as a thing that is antiquated and unfit for present use; and feel that we are just as much at liberty to make improvements in the doctrines of Christ and in the means of promoting his religion, as in the doctrines of chemistry or the art of printing. Brethren, do we not all shudder at any thing like this? Shall we not then conscientiously guard the interests of the church, and earnestly deprecate any thing like innovations upon the pure doctrines of the gospel, and the divinely appointed means of salvation? For myself, may I but have an assembly of immortal beings before me, all composed and still, listening to the words of eternal life, and may I thus have opportunity, uninterruptedly, to pour the light of Divine truth upon their minds, and while I simply, tenderly, and faithfully preach the *word of God*, may the Holy Spirit open their hearts to receive the truth in the love of it, and I will ask no more. May I but have the privilege of thus seeing the pleasure of the Lord prosper in my hands, and I will give him all the glory. And when the work is done, I will heartily rejoice if there was nothing of human invention interposed between the naked sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the conquest of the heart. I will rejoice if nothing was interposed to turn off my eyes from that agency of the Holy Spirit which creates sinners anew.

If any means are proposed which are not expressly authorized by the word of God, it is specially important to inquire, *whether they are adapted to exert an influence corresponding with the holy nature of the Christian religion.* The remark is already familiar to us, that strong temporary emotions may be excited without any lasting effect upon the temper of the heart. Persons may be powerfully wrought upon by a variety of means, and may be agitated and distressed, and then relieved and filled with transports of joy, and may for a time be so altered in their feelings and conduct, that it shall appear to themselves and to others that old things are passed away, and all things become new; and yet, after a while, they may show that their hearts have not been touched, and that these excitements have produced no more effect upon their character than a mighty wind produces upon the center of the earth.

But what is the value of any impressions on the mind, except those which involve a change of the heart, and thus lay a foundation for a religion that is *solid and permanent?* This is the kind of religion we are to promote—a religion which will be an incorruptible seed remaining in the soul—an inexhaustible fountain incessantly pouring forth its salutary streams—a well of water springing up into everlasting life. As ministers of Christ, we are to promote a religion which will stand against the powers of the world, and the powers of darkness; which will live and thrive even in a spiritual famine, because it derives its supply from the fountain of life; a religion, in short, which will last till death, and till the judgment day, and for ever. It is such a religion as this, commencing in the renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit, and ending in perfect holiness and perfect glory, which Christian ministers are to promote. And if you would learn what manner of preaching is suited to promote this solid and permanent religious character, just look at the plainness, the seriousness, the simplicity, the ardor, and the affectionate but fearless fidelity, which everywhere appeared in the preaching of Christ and the apostles. These are our examples. If we declare the truth as they did—*pure* truth, *naked* truth—unaccompanied by any incongruous human additions, we do what belongs to us, to produce, and what is suited to produce, a permanent effect. The truths of God's *word are permanent*—they endure for ever. Let these holy truths be

planted in the heart—the more simple the better—through the grace of God let them take hold of man's moral nature so as to control his affections, and the work is accomplished. The soul once dead in sin, is endued with a new spiritual life, which will be eternal as its author.

But there is still another point which I must not wholly omit. The great end of preaching is to *glorify the author of salvation*, and to make it manifest to all men, that *the excellency of the power* which accompanies the gospel in the conversion of sinners, *is not of man, but of God.* And what is the kind of preaching which is suited to do this? Can we glorify God by keeping out of sight that work of his Spirit, which turns men from their sins? Can we make the impression which the apostle made, that *the excellency of the power is not of man, but of God*, by perpetually thrusting into view the feeble power and the dependent agency of man, as though he were omnipotent, and by forgetting that *God giveth the increase*, and that *he is all in all?* If we would glorify God, we must constantly bring his glorious attributes and his saving works into clear view. We must give due prominence to the greatness of his power, and the riches of his grace in the conversion of sinners. Our success depends wholly on the blessing of God; and we have every reason to believe that He will bless that preaching most, which makes the work of his Spirit most conspicuous, and most highly honors his glorious name. For, "*them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed, saith the Lord.*"

"Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impress'd
As conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men."

"I venerate the man, whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves."

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SERMON CXLIX.

By Rev. RICHARD S. STORRS,

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UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Ephesians iii. 8.—*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

To one, whose experience has not taught him what is meant by the "life of God in the soul," Paul's expressions of humility will savor either of extravagance or affectation. For, whether we judge of him by his native genius, his literary attainments, or the depth and fervor of his piety, he was unquestionably the greatest of the apostles. And yet, he speaks of himself as "unworthy to be *called* an apostle"—as "the chief of sinners"—and as unfit to be classed with "the least of all saints."

So deep and thorough was his self-abasement! for, in all this, he was sincere, and well knew that he deserved neither the applause of men, nor the favor of God.

And yet, when his apostolic character was assailed by false teachers (who would have broken down his influence), he was not backward to vindicate himself from their aspersions. It was a character that he had assumed in obedience to God, and it was a duty he owed to God to maintain its dignity, and affirm himself to be "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." But while as a commissioned servant of the Most High, he would "magnify his office"—as a *sinner*, indebted to grace alone for salvation, he felt and acknowledged himself to be exceeding vile.

The most eminent saints have ever been distinguished for humility. Says one of the fathers—"Those boughs of the fruit-bearing tree that are most heavily laden, will hang the lowest; so, those Christians that most abound in the fruits of holiness, will be most humble. Agreeably to this, we find nowhere stronger expressions of self-abasement, than those from the lips of Abraham, Jacob, Job, Moses, David, Isaiah, and other patriarchs and prophets.

But he who brings forth *no* fruit unto *God*, carries himself erect through the world—proclaims everywhere his beneficence, his integrity, his tender compassion, and his prayers, and boasts of a thousand services that he

renders to God and to man, with as much self-complacency as if he had nothing to be ashamed of. But alas! he knows nothing yet, as he ought to know, either of his own heart, or of the grace of God,—for he compares himself, *not* with the *divine law*—the only infallible standard—but with a standard framed by his own imagination. Hence his false judgment of his own character, and the character of others. Hence, to him, the apparent affectation or extravagance of the *Christian's* language, when he confesses himself a sinner, *deserving* only of death. He cannot comprehend it—he cannot believe it sincere.

But let him only consent to bring forth fruit unto holiness, and to serve God with half the zeal he serves the world, and the darkness in which he is enveloped will be dispersed, and he will understand both the cry of the leper, and the prayer of the publican.

I am not now to discuss the validity of the claim urged by the apostle to the honor and authority of an ambassador for Christ; nor to vindicate the commission under which he carried the glad tidings of the gospel to the gentiles. He wished it to be understood distinctly, that he did not preach without authority—nor extend his labors beyond the pale of the ancient church, without positive instructions to do so. And he labored much to establish these points, because his character was traduced by those who envied his success, or were hostile to the truth.

But my wish is to direct your attention to the chief theme of his preaching—a theme never to be exhausted—and not fully to be comprehended by finite minds, while eternity endures—

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Though the glories of the plan of redemption are incomprehensible—we are not forbidden to draw near, and look into them. *Angels* are our fellow-servants; and desires that *angels* indulge are not unlawful to *us*.

The unsearchableness of these riches will appear, if we consider, I. Whose they are: II. Their nature: III. Their extent: IV. The manner of their communication.

I. Whose they are. We know that "in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." We know that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily:" that "he is the head of all principalities and powers, of all might and dominion, and of every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come." We know that "by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers—all things were created by him and for him—and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Until we are able to comprehend the infinite perfections of the *Creator*, we shall not be able to explore the riches of Christ. "Can any by searching find out God? Can any find out the Almighty to perfection?" But Christ is God—over all—blessed for ever!

Elsewhere, the "riches of Christ" are denominated "the riches of his *goodness*;" and it is with peculiar emphasis that the compassion and grace of Christ are styled "unsearchable." For who can fathom the love of Jesus! Who can scan its heights, or explore its depths, or measure its *length and breadth*? All other love is finite—this is infinite: all other *love is inspired by some* deserving object—this is self-originated, and

seeks the happiness of the ill-deserving. Surely "it is love that passeth knowledge!"

God so loved the world—a world dead in trespasses and sins—that he gave his Son, his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, to die for its redemption! And his *Son* so loved the world, that he gave *himself* to the accursed death of the cross for our deliverance from everlasting condemnation!

Had the world for ever sunk under the load of its guilt, the glory of God had not been tarnished, nor his happiness diminished: for his entire independence precludes the possibility of injurious results to his government from the just punishment of offenders. Nor was he under *obligations*, arising from the relations in which his rebellious offspring stood to him, to show them favor. By throwing off their allegiance, and putting themselves in array against him, they had annihilated every claim on his forbearance. And when he devised a scheme of *mercy*, and proceeded to put it into execution, he displayed those "riches of goodness," which not the most enlarged of created minds can comprehend. Truly, *here* is an ocean without bottom or shore—here is love, whose riches are "past finding out." Consider,

II. The *nature* of these riches. By this, I mean, their influence on human character, and the relation they bear to human happiness. "Christ is made of God unto us," saith the apostle—"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

He is the prophet of the world—he delivers men from their ignorance, acquaints them with the true character of God, the spirituality and extent of his law, their own fallen state, the relation in which they stand to their Creator, and the duties they owe to him, and to each other. He makes them know the insufficiency of their own works of righteousness, to secure their salvation—the necessity of a new birth—their dependence on the sovereign mercy of God—and their inevitable condition after death, if found impenitent.

On all these subjects, Christ is the only true and authoritative teacher, and the world is in darkness in regard to them all, wherever his instructions are not enjoyed.

He is the great *atoning sacrifice* of the world. A conviction is very deeply wrought in the human mind everywhere that *some* satisfaction must be made to God for sin. Hence, the pagan submits to bodily torture, or destroys the children of his body, and perhaps lays down his life. Hence the follower of the false prophet denies himself many coveted luxuries —performs a long and dreary pilgrimage to Mecca, and submits to various penances and mortifications. And hence the nominal Christian repeats his devotional forms, observes his fasts, endows religious establishments, purchases indulgences, and calls for the "extreme unction"—all to render God propitious!

But, saith the apostle, "*Christ* is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." By the shedding of his blood, he hath wrought out a righteousness which God can accept, and in virtue of it, treat as holy *all who believe*. "*Without* the shedding of blood, there is no remission;" and, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, Jesus suffered without the gate." "He was offered,

that he might bear the sins of many, and purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." Nor "is it possible, that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin; but we are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ, once for all."

He is the *Ruler* of the world. The government is on his shoulders, and shall never end. By his wisdom and power in the administration of affairs, good is brought out of evil, and order out of confusion. The rage of the heathen, and the vain imaginations of the people, are made to subserve his glory, and the happiness of his chosen. No weapon formed against Zion can prosper, for he carrieth the counsels of the wicked headlong—breaketh their arrows, and turneth them back, ashamed and confounded. A thousand tongues may be whetted for lies—a thousand volumes of error may be sent abroad—a thousand hands may be raised to oppose the progress of truth—but all will be overruled for the wider diffusion of the spirit of piety, for the more effectual overthrow of opposition, and for the firmer establishment of the kingdom that shall comprehend all the kingdoms of the world.

Now who can measure that grace which relieves a world of immortal beings from a mass of ignorance, that otherwise must have placed them beyond the reach of hope? Who can measure that grace which rescues a world of rebels from the grasp of a violated law, by pouring forth the blood of the Son of God to meet its demands, and carrying him from the *tomb* to the right-hand of the throne, to make continual intercession And who can measure the grace that interposes to obviate every assault of earth or hell, on the subjects of redeeming mercy—confounding every evil machination, and crowning the head, bound like the bulrush, with victory and honor for ever?—Surely, in the language of the apostle, "We need to be strengthened with might in the inner man, according to the riches of his glory, that we may be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height of this love of Christ. "It is high as heaven, what canst thou do! deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" Consider,

III. The extent of these riches. And here we may contemplate them, both in their duration, and the numbers who share them.

1. In their duration. All other riches perish with the using; and the gratifications they procure are no sooner enjoyed than gone for ever.

But the riches of Christ are eternal. Though they take hold on this world, they flow onward through everlasting ages. *Here*, they secure the presence of God, and the pleasures of hope; they protect the soul from a thousand dangers—carry it in safety through many a long and gloomy storm—inspire unconquerable fortitude under trials—give peace and composure in the darkest scenes, and fill the mind with well-founded anticipations of future happiness. But hereafter, faith will be absorbed in vision, and hope lost in actual enjoyment. The believer shall find a mansion provided for him in his Father's house—an inheritance that no power can pluck from his hand, a kingdom that never shall be moved. And who can read of the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—the holy city, whence sin and sorrow shall be for ever banished—and of the seraphic *employments of* the redeemed about the throne, and not acknowledge that *the "riches" by* which the whole is procured, are "unsearchable!" But,

2. Vast numbers will share these blessings. "A multitude that no man can number" will stand on Mount Zion, having palms in their hands, and tuning their harps to the praise of redeeming mercy. And it is not from one favored spot on this wide world—it is not from some one distinguished community, nor from a single generation—but from all nations, tongues, and kindreds under heaven, that the great congregation is made up. *There* will be found the Scythian and the barbarian, the bond and the free; *there* will the learned and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the mighty and the feeble, sit down together at the same banquet of love!

Think not that the blood of Jesus is insufficient to wash away the sins of so many. A *world* might wash in that fountain, and be clean. Nor is it the crimson stains of a Manasseh, nor the filthiness of a Mary Magdalen, nor the persecuting spirit of a Saul of Tarsus, that can resist the efficacy of that blood. "Come unto me *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "*Whosoever will*, let him come." It is not the amount of guilt that may have been accumulated—it is not the deadliness of the wounds that sin may have inflicted, nor is it the late period to which repentance may have been already deferred, that can bar us from a share in the riches of Christ, if we are now ready to accept them. No,—it is *nothing* but our own reluctance to be *indebted* to those riches, that can deprive us of any blessing that atoning blood hath purchased, and free grace offered.

Where then is the sinner who feels himself more unworthy and hell-deserving than any other? Where the sinner who, under the crushing weight of recollections of the *past*, looks on the future as one wide field of darkness and despair?—let him look unto *Jesus!* The question shall not be asked him, "What have you done?" nor "where have you been?" But crying, "Lord, save or I perish,"—he shall have it said to him, "Fear not, it is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Are not the riches of *such love* past finding out?—O the unsearchable grace that proposed the recovery of a *world* lying in wickedness! Consider,

IV. The manner of their communication to the soul. Strange it is, but not the less true, that there is a universal reluctance on the part of mankind to accept of blessings that have cost so much in their purchase, and are yet so freely offered. The gospel finds men everywhere "dead in trespasses and sins;" and "He who is the chief among ten thousand" is, to their eye, like "a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness."

Nor is there any manifestation of his glory, or demonstration of his authority, that can urge home his claims on the heart with overpowering effect. He may heal the sick, and raise the dead, and command the stormy elements to repose; nay more, he may yield his life amid the convulsions of sympathizing nature, and pour forth his compassion on his enemies in the agonies of death—and *all* will not prevail over the obduracy of the heart—all will not bend the stubborn will to the acknowledgment of his claims. Thousands witnessed this awful scene, and yielded to no relentings. Millions have heard again and again the story of Calvary's bleeding sufferer, and even though they may have dropped a passing tear, the next moment has stifled their sensibilities, and hurried them down the stream of earthly cares and vanities.

What then can render the riches of Christ availing? I answer,

1. The sovereign purpose and grace of God. Much as may have been objected against the sovereignty of Divine grace, there is no doctrine taught in Scripture more clearly, none that is more rational, nor, to the devout spirit, more comforting. It is indeed, when justly understood, the strong pillar on which the convinced sinner leans, and directs the eye of hope towards heaven. While a willing captive of Satan, an enemy of God, and a child of disobedience—whence shall holy dispositions arise? Whence those mighty motives come, that shall overwhelm the opposition of the soul, and reduce its rebellious powers into sweet submission? Can human effort extract good from evil, light from darkness, or love from hatred? No, brethren—and unless the purpose of God be formed, and his mighty power exerted, there is no hope of the salvation of a single sinner.

And then, if this power be put forth, who shall determine to what extent? Who shall say what proportion shall be made willing, and what proportion shall be left to themselves? Has *man* wisdom enough to decide such a question? Or, had he *wisdom*, has he *benevolence* enough?

Men please themselves, with the imagination, that had *they* the power, they would render all beings happy—but no dream of the night was ever more empty than this. Do such men actually contribute to the happiness of their fellow-men in proportion to their power?

O let me not fall into the hands of men, but into the hands of God! With all his sovereignty, God is holy—he is good—he can do no wrong; but man, vain man, invested with this prerogative, would prove but an almighty tyrant, treading on the necks of his fellows, and scattering everywhere firebrands, arrows, and death. Of little worth are the dreaming speculations of men, concerning what is right for a God of infinite benevolence to do! Of little value are those reasonings by which man would prove God arbitrary and unjust, if he "have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion."

No! the only hope that any man will ever cease from rebellion against his Maker, lies in that sovereign purpose of God, by which some are "*chosen* from before the foundation of the world to be holy, and without blame before him in love." These counsels are "unsearchable" indeed; and equally unsearchable are the "riches of Christ," in which they originate.

These "riches" are rendered availing,

2. By the operations of the Holy Spirit. "*Ye must be born again.*" "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." If the "love of God be shed abroad" in any heart, it is "by the Holy Ghost." If any "abound in hope," it is "by the power of the Holy Ghost." If any are "washed and *sanctified*," it is "by the Spirit of our God." And if God says of any man, "my *Spirit* shall no longer strive with him," he is sealed over to destruction.

But *how* operates the Holy Spirit? Christ answers, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." His *mode* of operation is unsearchable—it lies without the range of legitimate inquiry, and baffles every effort of the *mightiest human* intellect. It is enough for us to know the *fact*—to *throw ourselves into* the arms of the Divine influence, to obey the com-

mand, "Quench not the Spirit," and to "rejoice evermore," that however unsearchable the riches of Christ, they are infallibly secured to all that are "born again."

They are rendered availing,

3. By faith and repentance. "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "*Repent*, and your sins shall be blotted out." These are the fixed and unalterable terms of salvation. And yet, to the eye of proud, unenlightened reason, there seems no special adaptedness in them to the end to be secured. *Faith* in Christ forms no *equivalent* for the transgression of God's law; *repentance* can make no *satisfaction* for sin. Nay, they were not *appointed* for such an end. The only equivalent is found in the blood of the Son of God. "*He* has magnified the law, and made it honorable;" and God now says to the sinner—*repent*—*believe*—doing this, you acknowledge your impotency—your absolute dependence—the purity and perfection of the law you have broken, and the justice with which you might be thrust down to hell—and also, that if saved at all, you are saved by grace alone. Acknowledgments like these honor God, abase the sinner, and furnish overwhelming testimony to the evils of transgression, and the value of holiness.

Men often contend that these terms are unreasonable, and that their own works of righteousness are of sufficient value, and ought to be acceptable to God. But if men were justified by their *works*, would they not naturally regard those works as an equivalent for transgression? Would they not have more occasion than now, to say, "the law of God is nothing—though we have broken it, we can *repair* the injury—though we have dishonored God, we can yet honor him again, and blot out the past, and secure salvation, as if we had never sinned?" But let a principle like this be admitted, and the love of God would at once be broken down, his government would be prostrated at the feet of rebels, and universal misery would be the result. Yet carnal reason strongly inclines to this method of justification, and nothing is more common than to hear it affirmed, that God is more honored by the *good works* of the sinner, than by any measure of penitence and faith.

Here then, behold the unsearchableness of the riches of Christ. Notwithstanding the decisions of darkened *reason*, God declares that salvation shall be obtained only by that faith and repentance, which possess *no* virtue that will counterbalance the evils of transgression. Nothing in the shape of an *equivalent* is demanded of the sinner. He has only to believe the testimony of God; to cover himself with the robe of righteousness prepared for him; to confess, "I am a sinful man, O Lord,"—and submit to the decision of infinite wisdom and mercy on his character and future condition.

From such a state of mind, there will flow a systematic and thorough obedience to the will of God. Indeed, there is nothing that has such power as this principle of faith, to subdue the whole soul to God's authority—nothing like it, to subdue the opposition of the heart, to inspire zeal for the conversion of the world, and excite effort for the accomplishment of all God's purposes.

Such are the riches of Christ, in their communication to the soul; and are they not unsearchable?

REFLECTIONS.

1. If such are the riches of Christ, how great the folly of those who set them at naught?

Behold a treasure, vast as infinity, durable as eternity—freely offered to the acceptance of a ruined world! Behold a salvation from all evil—assured protection through *life*, firm support in *death*, unfading glory beyond the grave! All that Almighty power can do—all that infinite wisdom can devise—all that boundless compassion can proffer to man for his happiness, is pledged to every sinner who shall, in penitence, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! And yet,

By the multitude of mankind, all this is despised. Why? Because sordid attachments to earth must be broken—giddy pleasures must be abandoned—mammon must be sacrificed, and the smiles of God's enemies must be dispensed with! Yes! for the favor of the world (vanity and vexation of spirit, at its best estate), the love of God must be relinquished, and every just hope of heaven renounced!

And yet, O sinner! what enjoy you, even of this world, more than the believer? Are you rich? But many a child of God, dependent on cold charity, enjoys the *world* better than you do. Are you taking your fill of pleasure? But the *Christian*, weeping beneath his own crushing afflictions, looks on you with pity, and would sooner die a thousand deaths than change conditions with you. *He* has a share in the "unsearchable riches of Christ;" *his* treasures and joys are held in reversion in a better world; and even *now*, he has frequent *earnests* of them, that afford unspeakable delight amid life's chequered scenes. But when he shall reach his *home*, and sit down in his Father's house—when he shall look back on the toils and the discipline of this world, and then forward to the ever increasing bliss of eternity, think you he will regret the loss of your short-lived enjoyments? Sometimes Christians are pronounced *fools*; but where folly or where wisdom lies in the case before us, let the disclosures of the unsearchable riches of Christ determine.

2. If such are the riches of Christ, how groundless the apprehensions of some, that they are insufficient to meet the wants of all who may desire them.

His fulness is *infinite*; and "whosoever *will*," may "come and take the water of life freely." Whoever is willing to "break off his sins by righteousness," and to serve God with humility, will find no want of readiness in Christ to receive him. "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world!" His "blood cleanseth from all sin,"—not the least only, but the greatest. Only come to him, as *diseased* sinners, and he will make you whole,—as hungry and thirsty, and he will fill you with good things,—as hell-deserving sinners, and he will raise you to thrones of glory. Lose *no* time on the inquiry, "how may I qualify myself to be accepted?" No other qualification is demanded, than that conviction of personal vileness that shall lead you to cast yourself at his feet, and commit your soul, for time and eternity, to his disposal. *This is faith*—and to *this*, eternal life is pledged by the immutable truth of God.

Come then, fellow-sinner—yield yourself into the hands of Christ—*and he* will provide for you—he will guide you—he will defend you—*he will give you* a share in those riches that shall survive the ruins of the *great burning day.*

SERMON CL.

By Rev. RICHARD S. STORRS.

PREPARATION FOR MEETING GOD.

Amos iv. 12.—*Prepare to meet thy God.*

"God is not far from every one of us." "He compasseth our path, and knoweth our lying down and rising up." In the closet, the social circle, and the sanctuary—in the house and by the way—nay, in every department of life he is present, to observe and to succeed or frustrate our purposes. More than this—"if we ascend into heaven, he is *there;* if we make our bed in hell, behold he is *there:* if we take the wings of the *morning*, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the *sea*, even there does his hand lead us, and his right hand uphold us." "Whither shall we flee from his presence?"

But there is *another* sense in which God meets the children of men. There are those that love and obey him; and to *them* he furnishes gracious admonitions of their sins and duties; smiles on their efforts to serve him, grants them precious consolations, and sweet earnests of the rewards laid up for the just in heaven.

Others there are who *reject* his authority, and pour dishonor on his name;—and these he meets as an adversary, with merited rebuke and righteous indignation. To such a meeting rebellious Israel is summoned in the text:—a summons that will one day be heard by all persevering sinners.

But *can it be*, that He who has styled himself "the God of love," will ever come in robes of vengeance, and visit on men their iniquities, according to the literal tenor of his threatenings? Will He, who is merciful and gracious—he who is compassionate and kind—be so inexorably just, that he will never clear the guilty? Inquiries like these doubtless arose in the minds of the Israelites; for, in the context, they are referred to what he had already done to them, as proof that he would execute his threatenings against them to the full, unless repentance and reformation intervened. "I *have* given you cleanness of teeth and want of bread in all your cities. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, and sent the palmer-worm to devour the fruits of your fields. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt—and I have overthrown you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; yet ye have not returned unto me."

Famine, pestilence, and sword—those terrible ministers of justice in *this* world, had nearly depopulated the land, and converted it into a *desert.* And, *more* than all this, was denounced—even *total extirpation*—"I will draw you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks—not a remnant shall remain."—"Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; therefore, "prepare to meet thy God," as thy Judge!

The fact, that God is one day to be met by every man in judgment, should constrain us to contemplate seriously,

I. His judicial character.

II. The preparation necessary for meeting him in peace.

Observe then,

I. His judicial character. Four points in it demand special attention; viz. His Righteousness, Benevolence, Knowledge, and Power.

1. His *righteousness.* God has no disposition to invade the rights, nor to impugn the just claims of any being in the universe. "All his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." His *cherished* affections, and chosen course of action shall determine his destiny.

Every *law* of God is righteous, both in its principle and penalty—is perfectly adapted to the capacities of his creatures—commended to their *consciences*—fitted to promote their *welfare*, and ensure them the possession of enduring happiness. And in the *execution* of law, entire impartiality is maintained. None will be punished beyond his demerits. None will be exempted from punishment because of adventitious elevation or factitious distinction among his fellows. The high and the low—the rich and the poor—the Scythian and the barbarian—the bond and the free—will find their sentence awarded, agreeably to the eternal principles of right.

2. His *benevolence.* "There is none good but one—that is, *God.*" Of all goodness in the universe, he is the fountain and head. From him every beam of benevolence flows that irradiates any corner of the world—and to him every reflected beam converges, surrounding his throne with its brightest splendors.

Strict *righteousness*, regardless of every thing but its *legitimate* end, would exterminate the race of man from the earth at once—and consign all to realms of darkness and despair. But, blended with *benevolence*, it dispenses benefits to the undeserving—reserves to those under the curse of the law, a season of probation—bestows on them *common* mercies in abundance—proffers them life and immortality—points out the way to escape destruction—urges motive on motive to repentance—and provides refreshment and consolation for the fainting spirit, during its conflicts and sufferings.

It is in vain to contend that the benevolence of God does not consist with severe inflictions of his wrath—or that it breaks up the established connection between sin and sorrow, and assures the sinner of deliverance from the second death. It is no more inconsistent with the *benevolence* of God to subject the sinner to the gnawing of the worm that never dies, in a *future state*, than to subject him to pain here. His *condition* may as well be according to his *character*, hereafter as in the present life—and there is no more *incongruity* between the benevolence of God and the misery of the sinner, in *eternity*, allowing that no *injustice* is done him—than between the benevolence of God and the sufferings of the sinner in *this* life. And the numberless diseases that are abroad, carrying desolation and wo into the habitations of men—may well persuade us that all the threatened judgments of eternity may be executed on the persevering transgressor, not less consistently with Divine *goodness*, than with righteousness and truth.

Yet, while we know that God is *good*, we have security that He will

bestow on every creature all such blessings as they can receive without injustice done to God himself, and to other holy intelligences. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

3. His *knowledge*. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed."

We can imagine a judge, disposed to do *right*, and to show all favor to a criminal that the case will admit, yet falling into error, and passing unrighteous judgment, through the single defect of Knowledge: he may not perfectly comprehend the *law*—or he may not be furnished with all the necessary *evidence* in the case—or he may overlook essential points in that evidence—and of course his decision may not be equitable.

Not so with the Judge of all the earth. He that *framed* the law, shall not *he* understand it? He that looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven, shall not *he* fully understand the evidence on which judgment is to be rendered? Surely, "his eyes are on all the ways of men, and he seeth all their goings. He searcheth all *hearts*, and understandeth all the imaginations of the *thoughts*." Whatever *motive* to action influences the human heart, he knows it perfectly. Whether a transgression proceed from infirmity or deliberate purpose, from ignorance or malevolence—none can instruct *him*. Every circumstance that contributes to extenuate or aggravate the plea—every plea of the sinner in vindication of his conduct, and every excuse that he may urge in palliation—is weighed and understood by him, while he takes not counsel of any. On him falsehood can never be imposed for truth—nor can his eye be diverted from the great point in which the guilt of transgression lies. "His understanding is infinite."

4. His *power*. "The thunder of his power who can understand?" Behold the heavens that he has garnished with ten thousand thousand worlds!—Or examine the foundations of the earth—suspended upon nothing but his pleasure—maintaining an unobstructed course amid innumerable other worlds, and furnishing every accommodation to intelligencies, who are destined never to die—Behold him measuring oceans in the hollow of his hand, meting out the heavens with a *span*, comprehending the dust of the earth in a measure, weighing the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance—and doing according to his will, in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

The material universe is fitted up, as a great storehouse of *means*, for the accomplishment of the purposes formed in the Infinite Mind. By *these*, the mercies of God are to be revealed—the judgments of God to be executed—and every decision on the character of men and angels to be carried into effect.

He is able to "keep his saints from falling, and to present them faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy:" And when "he stretcheth out his hand against his enemies, both he that helpeth and he that is holpen shall fall together." "*Who* knoweth the power of his anger?" Is it not "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?"

Forget not—ye, that are borne onward, in time's rapid flight, to the bar of judgment—that the same God sits judge on your destiny there, who

once swept the *earth* of every living thing—overthrew the cities of the plain—caused Babylon to drink the cup of his fury—overturned Jerusalem, his chosen city, in anger—and has since spread desolations far and wide, dark and fearful, over the world—all in illustration of his judicial character. And He it is, who still says of his enemies—"Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:" "I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good."

Behold then your final Judge;—so *pure*, that the very heavens are not clean in his sight; so *good*, that his mercy itself is to be *feared;* so *deep* in understanding, that none can search it out: so *powerful*, that none can say to him, "What doest thou?" Before such a Judge, who can stand? Must we not all say, with the man after God's own heart—"Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified?"

Let the reverence and awe that thus filled the heart of David possess our bosoms, and we shall be ready to consider the second part of our subject—viz.:—

II. The preparation for meeting God in peace.

On this point many absurd notions are held—and to one or two of them some attention is due.

Say some—no other preparation for meeting God is necessary than *sorrow* for our sins,—our tears and prayers cannot fail to move his compassions. But, was ever man more overwhelmed by conscious guilt, or more deeply stricken with remorse, than JUDAS. Did ever man feel more keenly, or attest his feelings more clearly than he, when he threw down the wages of his iniquity, and went and hanged himself to escape the pangs of an accusing conscience? Yet *this* man, was "the son of perdition," and "went to his own place;" and Scripture has declared, that "it had been better for him never to have been born." No. Anguish of spirit makes no satisfaction for sin—tears blot it not from the records of heaven—and terrors disarm it not of its power to blast the hopes of the soul for ever!

Who ever heard—who ever *dreamed*, that either justice or compassion required the of sorrows a criminal to be regarded as an atonement for his crime? Or who ever heard of a law that threatened its transgressor with no other punishment than sorrow for his offence?

That man would be deemed a lunatic, who should think to escape the hold of his country's violated laws, by pleading his *regrets* for his offence; and equally beside himself is the sinner, who, after trampling the laws of Heaven under foot, expects to avoid the threatened consequences by the tears of grief.

But, it is said again, that God can sustain no *injury* from the sins of frail men—and ought therefore to be easily satisfied. It is granted, that men cannot destroy the happiness, nor the security of God. But *why* not?—Because he has power to defend himself—because, wrapped in his own infinite perfections, their wickedness cannot reach him—and then, *another* question—

How does he defend himself? Obviously by defending his *law*—that *law which the sinner* strives to break down, and wishes annihilated. But

that law is the grand safeguard of his throne. Let it be destroyed, and the divine government is at an end—and the moment when it can be transgressed with impunity, it is destroyed; and it is *then* transgressed with impunity, when its penalty shall cease to be executed; but its penalty is not *sorrow* for having broken it; and therefore sorrow cannot make it whole, nor render needless the infliction of threatened suffering.

Moreover, the *evil* of sin is not to be estimated by the amount of injury on God it actually *accomplishes;* but rather according to its *tendencies,* or what it *would* accomplish if unrestrained. And it is not too much to say, that unrestrained, it would go on to break down and destroy, till not a vestige of human enjoyment remained—till the besom of destruction had swept over heaven—till Jehovah had been despoiled of his glories—his throne overturned, and his being annihilated. A depopulated world, a wasted universe—a blended hell and heaven—a mighty chaos without a God to control its elements, would form the gloomy but certain trophies of sin's dominion.

And can *Reason,* clouded as it is, teach that such an evil may be expiated by *tears?*—that the sinner will be crowned with eternal life in consideration of his sorrows, when his dispositions are such that without Almighty power to restrain him he would fill the universe with misery?

And, if the *tears* of the sinner will avail nothing, can he present any *other* offering with acceptance?

Simon, the sorcerer thought that the gift of God might be purchased with *money. Cain* presented the first fruits of the field. *Jacob* devoted the spoils of Amalek. *Ahab* multiplied the altars of Baal. And the *Pharisee* paid tithes, fasted and prayed—and internally kept all the commandments from his youth up.—Were they *accepted?*

God has said, "I will have *mercy,* and *not* sacrifice." "I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goat out of thy flocks; for every beast is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell *thee,* for the world is *mine* and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?"

Two principles are here disclosed, on which God rejects the sacrifices of the sinner.

1. The sinner has nothing of his own to *offer* to God.

2. If he *had* any thing, God does not need it. And are they not both *true?* What can the sinner call his own? Is he more than the *steward* of another's estate? And what steward will take a portion of his offended master's property, and present it to him as the price of reconciliation.

God is the sole proprietor of all the sinner has in possession—he can lay his hand on *nothing,* and say, *This* is not God's. He might be stript therefore of all that he has, and sent to death and judgment in an hour, and have no ground of complaint. To attempt, then, to cancel any measure of his guilt, by offering to God any portion of his property, or any other talent committed to him, is an insult for which he might justly be sent to perdition without delay. And then again—

If the sinner held any thing independent of God, yet God has no *need* of it—and hence the pertinency of the prophet's interrogatories,—"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings—with calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give the first-born for my transgressions; the fruit of the body for the sins of the soul? Nothing of all this does God require. He needs no such sacrifices, and cannot be pleased with them, because they are not commanded.

It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. And, when Christ cometh into the world, he saith to the Father, "Sacrifices and offerings, and burnt-offerings for sin, thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein." Even all the sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation were valueless, though divinely appointed, except as *types* of the great atoning Sacrifice they faintly shadowed forth.

Preparation can be made to meet God in peace, only by accepting of Christ as our Saviour. This act of acceptance is called Faith. By faith are we justified, and have peace with God. Faith approves of the law which man has broken, and which Christ has magnified—as holy, just, and good—consents fully to the equity of the sentence passed on the transgressor—looks into the world of despair as the just desert of the sinner—and asks no other way of escape, than Heaven has provided by the propitiation made for sin.

It is one thing, you will remark, to believe that Christ came into the world, and suffered for the redemption of man—and another to accept of him as our only Savior. It is one thing, to believe with the understanding, and another to believe with the *heart*. "The devils believe and tremble." It is one thing to confess the justice of God's claims, and another to *yield* to those claims. Faith is more, far more, than an *intellectual* assent to *one*, or *all* the truths connected with Christ's mission, for such an assent may be given, while yet no transforming influence has passed on the soul, and no impression of God's image is made there.

Faith in Christ involves a thorough regeneration of all the moral powers. It involves the unreserved renunciation of personal righteousness—together with self-abhorrence, and the consecration of the whole soul to the service of God.

Faith constitutes a new and powerful principle of action. It elevates the affections from the creature to the Creator. It gives to every faculty a new direction—clears away a thousand obscurities from spiritual objects—and removes from the heart the host of prejudices that once rendered it hateful. The unbeliever lives only for *himself*, or the narrow circle around him; the believer lives for God and the universe. The unbeliever inquires, "who will show me any good?" The believer cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!" The unbeliever has his eye always on the honors and pleasures of the *world;* the believer contemplates the glory of Christ and the wide extension of a hallowing influence over the hearts of men, as the only object worth living for. "Old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

Faith is the homage which the soul pays to Christ as the "first and the last," in the government of the world—as the Almighty Protector of the cause of righteousness—as sustaining the whole weight of that moral kingdom, in which centre all the hopes and happiness of creatures, and all the glories of the godhead—as maintaining the honor and securing the strength of that great law of love, which forms the only medium of happy intercourse between God and other beings.

In this light are we required to contemplate Christ—and then, to cast ourselves at his feet, exclaiming, "Lord, save, or I perish." For on Him is our help laid; and "there is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved." It will avail nothing, to "thank God that we are not as other men are;"—nor to carry back our talents, and say, "Here, Lord, thou hast that is thine;"—nor to plead, that we "verily thought we ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" nor to accuse him openly, as an austere man, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed." In all this show of excuse and palliation there is no safety. On *Jesus* our eyes must be fastened. To *Jesus* our homage must be paid. For *Jesus* we must live and die; *Jesus* must be our All in All—else the day of judgment will reveal an angry God, from whose wrath there is no escape, and whose lips will declare the sentence of our condemnation,—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

REFLECTIONS.

1. Our condition in the present world is a very solemn one. Who can reflect on the character of our final Judge—or the aversion of the natural heart to the only terms on which he will meet us in peace—and the consequences of meeting him as an enemy—without astonishment at the general levity of mankind!

The world is the field of preparation for death and judgment. Time, the only allotted period for the work. And can it be wise to whirl away life, in devotion to the pleasures of animal nature—or in the accumulation of riches and honors that death will annihilate? Where are the thoughts of men? What are their expectations? What their gains? Are they in pursuit of *happiness*? But happiness is found only in securing the end for which they are fitted in their original constitution—and that end is nothing else than serving and glorifying God. If they propose *another* end, disappointment awaits them, and they sink for ever beneath their efforts to resist the purpose of Heaven.

Every thought, feeling, and action are sinful, which do not coincide with the great laws of our being. Whatever is done or attempted, whatever is suffered or enjoyed, in counteraction of these laws, adds to the sinner's guilt, and will aggravate his final misery. Whatever may be his efforts and whatever his hopes, unless they centre on the great end, of preparing to meet God by faith in Christ, he sows the wind, and will reap the whirlwind.

All who hear me are soon to appear before the Judge. You will stand or fall, for eternity, by the question,—Have you the faith that "overcomes the world?" If, serving God from day to day, in the spirit of Christ, you will come off *more* than conquerors over death and hell; but otherwise you are collecting fuel, by all your self-indulgence, for your own destruction in the great burning day.

O, who can calculate the value of man's short existence in the present world! Here the soul is fitted for heaven or for hell. Here the character is formed, for the society of angels or the abode of fallen spirits. Hence we go to meet that God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and who has sworn that he will take vengeance on his enemies. And now we

stand as on the cliff of some mighty rock, from which we cannot recede. Below us the billows roar,—and they are the billows of death! Above us opens the bright expanse of heaven: thence a voice proceeds, "Come up hither." An arm of mercy too is stretched forth, and comes within our reach. Shall we not seize its proffered aid—and let the waves of destruction dash harmless at our feet? Or shall we reject it—and sink for ever into the abyss yawning beneath?

O sinner, behold your situation. The day of decision is at hand. The Judge standeth at the door. Are you prepared to meet him?

2. I wish to propose the inquiry, distinctly, to every individual before me,—Have you been driven by the terrors of the Lord, or led by the arm of his mercy, to renounce your own righteousness for ever, and lay hold on Christ, as your only Hope?

The plan of salvation revealed, is *full*. Its provisions are ample. The chief of sinners can ask no more. But have you *accepted* those provisions? Do you value them, according to the *price* paid for them—and the magnitude of the blessings in their train? They will not be thrown away on those who care not for them.

The king who spread the marriage feast, invited *all* to come—even those in the streets and lanes of the city. And provision, *enough* for all, and to spare, was made; but none was sent abroad to those that refused to come; and if any came without a wedding garment, they were sent away in disgrace.

So, however abundant the provisions of the gospel, there are limits to the participation of them, beyond which they profit nothing. If men will not come to the feast—or if they will come arrayed in their own righteousness, before *them* the table is spread in vain. Though Christ has died, *they* are not cleansed in his blood—and though he has said, "whosoever will, let him come"—the bread and the wine are not for *them*.

And now, I repeat the question, have you laid hold on *Christ*, as your only refuge from the impending storm? Have you found a place within that only ark of safety?

Or are you not thinking more lightly on the subject of preparation for the solemnities of judgment, than its importance demands? And are you not saying of Christ—"we cannot have him to reign over us?"

But, I hear you say,—"ere death comes, we mean to begin the service of God;" "when debility and age are upon us—when sickness, and the king of terrors meet us—then the claims of religion shall not be overlooked, nor the great business of life neglected!"—And,

Are these your best purposes? And for these will God meet you as a friend? O sinner, is it so, that his yoke is grievous—that his commands are unreasonable, and incompatible with your happiness! Think again. You cannot be happy in obeying God! Cannot be happy in the imitation of angels and of Christ! What an insult on your Maker! What an insult on your blessed Savior! Think again. And remember, that you must soon meet this insulted God, this injured Savior, in the clouds of heaven!

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SERMON CLI.

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THE SINNER'S ABILITY TO OBEY GOD, IF HE WILL.

Isaiah xxx. 10.—*Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things.*

This was the language of the Israelites to the faithful preacher of God's word. When boldly reproved for their sins, and threatened with the vengeance of God unless they repented, they were impatient, and clamorously demanded, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things."

Men are equally unwilling *now* to be faithfully told of their faults and of their danger: determined to go on as long as they can in their beloved sins, they will not endure any disturbance in their gratification; they close their ears, and utterly refuse to hear the faithful preacher; they take refuge in excuses which enable them to turn off the arrows of conviction; and then again they cry out, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things."

Among the doctrines of which men complain as hard, and instead of which they ask for something smoother, is that of the *eternal punishment* of the finally impenitent. They see plainly, that if the doctrine be true, their present course is one of perfect madness, and yet they are so fully determined to keep on in that course, that all thought of the doctrine fills them with anger and self-condemnation. If the thought of it comes up even in the busy hours of the day, or in the gayest, brightest circles of pleasure, it is absolutely intolerable: it is like an intrusion from the demon of the pit.

Hence, to keep themselves easy, they demand some smoother doctrine. They say, and insist that others shall preach to them, "that God will

not punish his creatures for ever;" *some* punishment they deserve, and will receive, but all will finally come off well, and be eternally happy. Thus they can rest easy; they will live as they list; endure the punishment which is prepared for them, and then enter into heaven!

This smooth and easy doctrine rests upon *another*. They argue thus:—Men cannot *deserve* eternal punishment. God sent them into the world with sinful dispositions, which they cannot remove. He gave them a law which it is utterly impossible for them to obey: men cannot come up to the full requirements of the law. Sins and frailties man has, to be sure, and for them he will receive some punishment; but it is out of the question that God will condemn us to eternal punishment, for not obeying the law, when he knows that we *cannot* obey. Thus it is that the smooth and easy doctrine that there is *no eternal punishment*, rests on the other smooth doctrine that *man is unable to do his duty*, and therefore cannot deserve eternal punishment. And to my own mind this objection appears perfectly unanswerable, if you allow it to be true that men *cannot* obey God. If indeed they cannot obey, it is certain they do not and cannot deserve eternal punishment for not doing it.

But believing that the doctrine of the future and eternal punishment of the finally impenitent *is* a doctrine of the Bible, I wish to do away with one of the strongest objections to it. In order then to meet the objection, I lay down this proposition: viz.

That man is able to obey God, if he will; and *therefore* does deserve the penalty God has threatened against transgression.

I enter upon this subject the more willingly, because the error in question is one of the strongest obstacles to the effect of religious truth on the mind. The difficulty is not, that men do not see and acknowledge the reasonableness, desirableness, and obligations of religion. I seldom meet with the man who pretends to have even a doubt on these subjects. But in urging home these obligations, we are constantly met with the appalling objection, '*I cannot*:—I know I have sinned; I acknowledge religion to be important: but I could not obey the law of God; and I cannot repent.' Here we are brought to a full stand. It is utterly in vain to try to press obligation any farther. For how can you make a man feel guilty for not doing that which he is unable to do? What possible reason can you offer why a man should repent, if he really cannot do it? What kind of argument would you use with a man to induce him to fly, when he has no wings, and cannot fly?

To prevent misapprehension, in meeting the sinner's excuses, it is necessary to keep clearly in view the fact, that the terms *can* and *cannot*, *able* and *unable*, are used in *two senses*, entirely diverse from one another, and yet a candid mind need not fall into any confusion on that account. These two senses may be illustrated thus:—I come to a sick man, and ask him to rise and take a walk with me: he says, 'I cannot.' I then perhaps come to you, indolently reposing on your couch, and ask you to rise and walk with me; but you also reply, 'I cannot.' Now in these two cases, the reply, *in words*, is the same: each says, I cannot. But I know, without the least doubt whatever, that the *meaning* is entirely different.

When the sick man says he cannot walk with me, he means that he is physically unable to do it; that let him desire to do it ever so much, it is utterly impossible. But when the indolent man says, I cannot, he means that he does not choose to do it; that he prefers lying upon the bed, to the trouble of walking with me.

It should be remembered, that when the creeds and confessions of churches, in imitation of the language of Scripture, tell us that the sinner cannot do this or that, it is solely in this latter sense in which they use it. When our Savior says, "No man can come to me," &c., he means (as in the case of the indolent man just mentioned), that he does not come because he *chooses to stay where he is;* he prefers *being away from Christ.* This is what the Bible means by such language. But the sinner excuses himself from obeying God, and denies his desert of future punishment, on the pretence that he is no more able to do what God requires him to do, than the sick and dying man is to rise and walk.

It is this false view of the subject which I wish to oppose, when I say, *that man can obey God, if he will.* And first,

Its perfect harmony with the Scriptures proves the truth of this proposition. Among the various opinions which exist relative to the Scriptures, all agree, I believe, that God has there given actual commands to men. He tells them, they must love him, that they must love their fellow-beings, that they must cast away their transgressions, must make to themselves a new heart, and a new spirit, must repent and be converted. These are not mentioned merely as things desirable, but as things which we must do; which we are directly and without qualification commanded to do. It is perfectly undeniable, then, that men are addressed just as if they could obey God.

It will be seen, then, at once, how perfectly the doctrine which I have stated falls in, so to speak, with the whole tenor of Scripture precept. On the supposition that men can do what God commands, we see at once why God should give these commands, and why he should utter his displeasure when these commands are disobeyed. Here is no jar, no inconsistency in the doctrine or facts of Scripture; but all beautifully and exactly harmonize with each other.

But to what painful perplexities, and apparent contradictions, at least, are we driven by any other supposition. For let it be granted for a moment that men cannot obey God, how puzzling such questions as these. How can he be just in loading me with burthens which he knows I could not bear? Where is my guilt in not doing impossibilities? Do I not deserve more pity than blame? How can I merit the tremendous curses of the law, for weaknesses which I could not help? Questions you will perceive which it is not easy to answer, and which, instead of leaving the light of truth to break forth from the sacred page, clothe it in gloomy darkness and doubt. The perfect coincidence and harmony then of the doctrine I maintain, with every other part of Scripture, proves it to be true; an integral part of the great system which God has revealed. Suppose you possess a very ingenious and complicated machine, perfect

except in a single wheel. After various trials, you at last find a wheel which exactly fits the place which was destitute, and in every minute and intricate part, is precisely the thing; would you have any doubt that you had found the *right* wheel? Such then is the force of the argument with respect to the doctrine in question, drawn from its harmony with Scripture.

But it may be said that our proposition is *inconsistent with the doctrine of original sin;* that if *that* doctrine be true, then we cannot obey the commands of God. I grant that there are misconceptions or perversions of the doctrine of original sin, inconsistent with man's power to obey the commands of God. But I deny altogether that any thing which I have advanced is at all inconsistent with the *real* doctrine of original sin. The real doctrine of original sin is not at all that God creates sin in men, either directly or indirectly; or places them in circumstances in which they are unable to do what God requires them to do. This is the view of it which the sinner takes, as one of his excuses: but a totally mistaken view. The true doctrine of original sin is, *that men become sinners in consequence of Adam's sin:* not that God creates sin in them as a punishment of Adam's sin, but that while they do *voluntarily* become sinners, it is in consequence of Adam's sin that they become such. But to say that you or I do voluntarily sin, and that this is in consequence of our ancestors having sinned, is a very different thing from saying that God creates sin in us, or makes us unable to do his will. Such is precisely the view of the subject presented in Romans v. 12,—"Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world," that is, he committed the first sin, and of course it was then, and in that manner, that sin entered into the world, and "death by sin,"—i. e. death was the consequence of sin; "and so," he proceeds, "death passed upon all men:"—why? "for that," or because that, "all have sinned:" or according to the description of sin given by the apostle, that sin is the transgression of the law; "because all have transgressed the law." Here you perceive, as if foreseeing the very abuse which would be made of the truth, the apostle is very careful to tell us, while he informs us that by one man sin entered into the world —that men are the authors of their own sin, that death passed upon all men, "for that"—for this explicit and sufficient reason—"*all have sinned;*" they have sinned: they have done that which exposes them to the wrath of God: which only exposes them to that wrath. The doctrine of original sin, then, freed from misconception, is not at all inconsistent with the position, that men can obey God, if they will. For nothing is plainer than that I may sin, in consequence of what another has done, and yet simply follow my own choice or preference in thus sinning.

Thus is the mind freed from all painful perplexity and doubts respecting the character of God, and another proof is given, that the truth must be perverted, ere men can excuse their sin, or charge it upon any but themselves.

But it may be said, that the position I maintain is inconsistent with the doctrine of *total depravity*, or the entire sinfulness of the human character before regeneration. But this can only be said from mistaken views *of the* doctrine. For what is the doctrine of total depravity, or the entire

sinfulness of the human character? Not that God in any way creates sin in men; but it is, that men have no holiness at all in them previous to regeneration: they sin and only sin, and thus their character is totally sinful. But how is the fact, that men do constantly and invariably and voluntarily sin, at all inconsistent with the other fact, that they can obey, instead of transgressing? So far from being inconsistent with the doctrine of total depravity, it is essential to the doctrine. For, suppose one so created that he *could not* obey God, that he could not help transgressing, he is an unfortunate being, but could not be a guilty being. We must pity him, but could not find it in our hearts to blame or punish. But when I see a being who can obey the commands of his God, I know that he should; when I see such a being just telling his God that his own will he will follow, and persevering in that course, in direct opposition to law, and always doing it, he is a being guilty and depraved, not unfortunate; *he deserves* the displeasure of God.

But how is it possible, some may say, that I am totally depraved, completely sinful? Sinful to some extent I acknowledge I am, but not totally so, for I practise many things, such as honesty, sobriety, &c., which I am sure are such as God approves, and are not sinful. I answer—suppose a father, on leaving home in the morning, gives this peremptory charge to his son, that he is to stay in the house all that day; that on *no account whatever* is he to go out. Soon as the father is gone, the boy very coolly takes his hat and goes out, and remains the whole day. He does not go, you may suppose if you please, into vice or idleness; but goes to his school or to his business, quietly and industriously. Now is not that boy transgressing his father's commands, every hour and every moment of that day? True, much of the time he is not even thinking of his father, or his commands, so engrossed is he with his books or his business; and is even doing things which his father at other times would approve: but still in every thing he does, he is constantly transgressing his father's will: the command was that he should stay at home: he will not do it, he is entirely disobedient. The father at night calls his son to account; the child acknowledges the fact of absence from home during the day, but pleads that he had been industrious at his studies or his business. Yes, the reply would be, but I told you to stay at home; your absence proves a deliberate purpose to disobey; your industry and good behavior are nothing, because they were not done to please me. Had you any affection for me, you would have shown it in the way I pointed out. But your disobedience shows, that even those things which appeared well, you performed to please yourself, not me.

This illustration may show how the sinner is constantly disobeying God, totally sinful. The command is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. The command is obligatory every moment.

But the sinner does not obey at all; he is constantly sinning. Every thing which he does is sinful; for his disobedience shows, that he does every thing to please himself, and not God.

But it may be said that the position which I maintain is *inconsistent with the need of divine influence.* If men can obey the commands of God,

then what need is there of the Holy Spirit, to renew the heart, and lead them to repent? But this can only be said from mistaken views of the nature and design of divine influences. Some appear to imagine that divine influence is given merely to help weakness: to give the sinner strength to do that which he has no power to perform. Thus I am too weak to raise the weight of a ton, and so a lever, a screw, or wheel and pulley is given to me to enable me to do it. So it is supposed, the Holy Spirit is given to men to enable them to do that which they have no kind of ability to do. But this is a totally mistaken view of the necessity of divine influence. Divine influence is given to incline, or influence, the sinner to do that which he can do, if he will, but which, through the voluntary perverseness and wickedness of his heart, he *will not* do—till this divine influence is imparted. The two different modes of viewing the subject may be illustrated thus:

There are two children: one is commanded to read a page from a Hebrew book which is given to him. He cannot do it: what *he* needs is some *help*,—some further knowledge or capacity to enable him to do it. The other child is told to read an easy sentence from an English book. He *can do it;* but, through obstinacy, *will not*. Now, what *this* child wants is not *help* to *enable* him to read, but some influence exerted on his mind to *induce* him to read. So the influences of the Spirit are given to *influence* a perverse and rebellious being to change the purpose of his heart.

How then is the position that men can obey God inconsistent with the need of divine influence? The sinner is going on in sin with full purpose of heart; he is determined in his course; reason, argument, and truth have not moved, they never will move him from his purpose. Left to himself, he will certainly go on in sin and ruin. Does not such a sinner need a divine influence to turn him from his sin?

The true doctrine of divine influence, then, so far from affording a refuge or excuse to the sinner, is the very doctrine which shows him the exceeding greatness of his sin and guilt. It proves him guilty of a deliberateness, wilfulness, determination in his guilt, for which no vengeance could be too great. The fact, then, that sinners *can* obey God, and *will not*, shows the need of divine influence.

Harsh as the language seems, I must now draw the inference that *you do deserve eternal punishment.* God has ordained that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and we only say that every sinner who takes up his dreary abode in hell is the guilty cause of his own destruction, and deserves to be there.

In this discourse I have endeavored to tear away the refuges in which sinners intrench themselves, and to show the reason why they deserve eternal punishment,—that they could, but *would not* obey God. Did the opinion on either side end in mere speculation, I should consider these consecrated hours abused when occupied in such discussion. But it ends not in mere speculation: the question is no less than this—whether God or the sinner is to blame for sin; whether he has or has not a good *reason for* disobeying God. If God is to blame, then go on in sin, and

I will trouble you no more; if *you* are to blame, then you deserve, and must receive, the reward of your doings—eternal punishment.

If you were unfortunate creatures, who could not obey God, then you could not deserve eternal punishment. But this is not the case; you can obey God: the only reason why you do not is that *you will not*. You are voluntary in your rebellion against God, and therefore deserve his wrath. What! you angrily ask, send your fellow-creatures to hell!—Consign us all to eternal condemnation! *I* send you to hell!—*I* give you over to condemnation! God knows that I desire your salvation; that often I have urged you to come to Christ; that I have pointed you to the only way of life, and would gladly have persuaded you to turn and live: but "*ye will not come.*" It is *God* who hath declared, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" "except ye repent ye shall perish;" and what ambassador will dare to keep back the message of his Master?

Did I leave your case hopeless, then well might you complain. Did I merely tell you that hell's dark gulf was before you, that your feet would slide in due time, and then leave you to the horrors of hopeless, utter despair, then well might you complain of me as the hateful bearer of bad tidings,—as wishing to deprive you of the little hope you could enjoy in this poor life. But it is not so. I come to tell you that you need not be destroyed; I bring you the glad news that you are not bound by any irresistible destiny to destruction; that you can be saved; that if you do perish, it will only be because you would not have life; that even for you, who all your life long have been living in purposed and voluntary rebellion against God, there is pardon and life, if you will come for it; that even "while you were yet enemies, Christ died for you."

But while I say this, I do again solemnly warn you that your present course leads down to hell; for it is a course of voluntary rebellion against God: that if you at last make your abode there, you deserve it.

I say this, as I see many of you travelling, with fearful rapidity, the broad road to death. But you are careless, laugh as gayly, tread as merrily, toil as busily, as though only life and happiness were before you. Your present joys are fleeting and transient; even at the longest, you can have them but a little while, and then you part with life, joy, light, for ever: yet for these you are bartering your soul, and despising the eternal treasures of bliss which God can give. Why will you die?—why will you keep on? You comfort yourselves with thinking that you are not to blame. As you float down the current, you lull conscience to sleep by the fatal opiate that you are not to blame, that you cannot do any thing, that you are under some resistless agency of good or evil; and when I come and say that you are indeed a sinner, so desperately wicked that you *will not* obey God, and have all your life long been voluntarily resisting him, you deny it; you are too proud to acknowledge that there is such deep guilt attached to you. Instead of falling down, confessing and forsaking your rebellion, you excuse yourself by charging your sin on God, and thus deepen your own damnation.

But if what I have said be true, you have no excuse. Far above all cavil lie the government and dealings of God; pure as the untroubled brightness around his throne, shines his character, while the sinner is seen

to be a voluntary, hateful rebel, darkly and malignantly fighting against his God. Yes, impenitent sinner, you have gone on in sin for a whole life—you have sinned against the light of reason and conscience. God fully warned you of your danger, but you would keep on: you were often entreated and urged, but you would not turn. And when God even sent his own Son to die for you, and his Spirit to influence, you scornfully trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God, and did despite unto his gracious Spirit. Does not such a sinner deserve punishment? Is it unjust to make him the eternal monument of Divine displeasure?

You cannot say that you are waiting for the Spirit to help you; for you have all along been resisting the Spirit of God. There is no such thing as waiting for the Spirit of God to help you. What is called waiting for God's help is, in reality, determination not to turn. There is enough influence of the truth and Spirit already, if you, instead of resisting, will yield. If then you are finally and for ever cast out from the presence of God, you will go, not because you could not help it, nor for disobeying commands which you could not obey, but because you would choose death and hell. And as its fires kindle, and rage, and consume, through the dreary ages of eternity, you will feel that you deserve it all; that you have brought it upon yourself. Could you think that you had not been to blame, that you did not deserve hell, then you might despise its burnings, and despise the hand that kindles them: you might feel the proud and sustaining consciousness that you were an innocent and injured being.

But, no: you will be eternally wrung with the bitter reflection that you are a self-destroyer,—the self-made victim of eternal wo!

SERMON CLII.

By Rev. G. W. PERKINS.

THE SINNER'S ABILITY TO OBEY GOD, IF HE WILL.

Isaiah xxx. 10.—*Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits.*

In the preceding discourse, I stated it as a well known fact, that men now, as well as anciently, disliked a kind of preaching which troubled them in their sins. I remarked that the doctrine of the future and eternal punishment of the impenitent was a truth so dreadfully alarming to one determined to go on in sin, that he either insisted upon smoother preaching,

or else took refuge in some excuse, which could quiet his fears while he continued in sin. The refuge often taken is, that man is a being so frail as to be utterly unable to obey God, and does not, and cannot *deserve* to be eternally punished for not performing impossibilities. I stated too that this was the common refuge of sinners of every kind, when urged to the immediate performance of their duty: that to every call to repentance the reply is, I cannot: and that thus the mouth of the preacher is effectually stopped. For what sense or reason in urging a man to do impossibilities? Where is the use of preaching, until this matter is cleared up? Why preach repentance—present motives, and urge men to repentance, if they cannot repent? Why spend my breath, my strength, in urging a man to believe on Christ, if he cannot believe?

How delightfully smooth and consoling, when conscience stings, and the Bible threatens, to think that, after all, no real blame can be attached to you! The lazy and inconsistent Christian, too, applies the same smooth and flattering unction to his soul. He is very slothful, and very worldly selfish, or prone to sin of some kind: he knows it; does not even attempt to deny it. But to break away from it will put him to too much trouble: endure the agonies of remorse and self-condemnation, he will not. He therefore saves himself all trouble and all remorse, by thinking man is too weak to obey God: I cannot be perfect, even if I desired it; I cannot do as well as I could wish. If I do as well as I can (which, by-the-way, in the mouth of such a man, always means, "as well as I find it convenient"), that is all that can be expected from me. Thus they live in the actual indulgence of sin, and yet keep their hopes firm and bright, and think they are in the path to heaven. They profess sorrow for their sins, to be sure; but it is such a kind of sorrow as they would feel for a broken limb, or a painful disease, or any thing else which they could not help, instead of the deep, "godly sorrow" which works reformation and holiness.

It was my object to throw myself at once into this strong-hold of sin; to demolish, if possible, this refuge of the sinner; to clear away from the character of God the foul imputation of commanding impossibilities; and to show sinners of every kind, that they had no such excuse, that there is no such smooth doctrine for them; that each act and feeling of sin is their own guilty voluntary choice; deserving, and certain to receive, eternal punishment, unless repented of and forsaken.

In order to do this, I stated the position, that *men can obey God, if they will;* and therefore *deserve eternal punishment* if they do not obey.

In support of this, I alleged, *first*, the perfect harmony of this doctrine with the other doctrines and facts of scripture.

I come now to a *second* argument, *viz.*—

Man's own consciousness proves that he can obey God if he will. By this I mean, that every one, from simple self-inspection, knows, without any other proof, that he can do, if he will, what God commands him to do. He is conscious of it, just as he is conscious of any of his other powers or acts. When I apply my mind to any study, I am conscious that I possess the power of doing so: when I dislike any individual, I know, or am conscious of such dislike. When I like any particular gratification or employ-

ment, I am perfectly conscious of such attachment. Thus the mind is conscious of, or takes cognizance of, its own powers and acts: possessing evidence of them, of a higher kind than any other evidence whatever. Now in every sin, if I reflect, I am perfectly conscious of this,—that I was choosing some other gratification, some other happiness, than that of pleasing and obeying God. No compulsion, or force of any kind, fixed my choice: but I, in view of the circumstances, voluntarily made the choice I did. I take it for granted, then, that all others, who will take the trouble to examine their own minds, will find the same to be true.

If, now, you turn upon me with the cutting inquiry, do *you* never commit sin? and if you *can* obey God, why do you not *always* obey him? Why sin at all?—I am very willing you should put such questions to me; and instead of evading, or palliating the matter, I only say, Therein consists the damning guilt of sin, and of my own sin: that is the very reason why, like every other sinner, I do deserve eternal punishment. Why, I acknowledge to my God, each day, that if I received my just deserts, I should be lifting up my eyes in torment, instead of hoping in his mercy. This is what makes sin so hateful and malignant, even when the good man commits it, that it is voluntary disobedience to God, when the sinner knows that he could and ought to have yielded obedience. This is the reason why, each Sabbath, I do here acknowledge for myself and you, our aggravated guilt; that in each act of sin the past week, we *might have done better*, but *would not*. That is sin indeed; and that is the reason why some will not receive it: it so harrows up the conscience, is so awfully humbling, that some smoother doctrine is demanded, to quiet theconscience.

But suppose I ascribed my sin not to my own choice, but believed that, some how or other, I really could not help sinning, what would be these confessions which you hear from my lips, but mere mockery,—hypocritical professions of an humility which I did not feel? Why should I, in that case, feel any compunction, or guilt for my faults?

Again, I get at the evidence of consciousness in another way. I can review various acts of my past life; for some of which I feel guilty, or, in other words, deserving of blame and punishment; for others, I have no such feelings of guilt. Now when I come to examine these acts, and feelings, for which I feel guilty, I find invariably that I have this accompanying consciousness, that I might have done, and ought to have done, otherwise: or, in other words, I never feel guilty or deserving of blame or punishment, for any actions or feelings, except those which it was in my own power to do, or not to do. I may feel *sorry* for a great many things, sorry that I am no stronger, sorry that I cannot learn or remember more than I can. But I have not that peculiar feeling termed *remorse*, or consciousness of guilt, except for the voluntary choice of my own mind. When the mind, therefore, has that consciousness of guilt for transgressing God's commands, it must be because there was the power of doing otherwise than transgressing.

Another striking illustration of what the testimony of conscience is on this subject, is found in the spontaneous language of children. Wherever opportunity presents, I endeavor to converse with them on religion; their *sinfulness*, and their obligation to love and serve God.

him, just as you dislike a disgusting reptile; you may wish he were out of the way, just as you wish to get rid of any troublesome vermine; but you no longer consider him as *wicked* and *blame*-worthy.

Thus, the ordinary sentiments and instinctive feelings of men furnish decided proof of what is true on this subject. When they see each other doing wrong, they never think of starting the question as to the *ability* of the individual to do right: it is taken for granted that he can, and blame is dealt out on the principle that he can. But if the wicked and rebellious son can give up that rebellion, and love and obey his parents, why can he not give up his enmity to God, and love and serve him? Why can he not give up his low and selfish propensities, and be a holy, heavenly-minded man? In all these cases the answer is the same: he *can*, but he *will not*.

But perhaps it will be said, even if this doctrine be true, it is *dangerous in its tendency:* men will begin to think there is some good in them, and not feel as strongly the need of repentance and a change of heart, if you tell them, without any qualification, that they can obey God, but will not.

What! if I tell men that every act and feeling of sin is their own voluntary choice of evil when they could do and feel right, is that likely to make them feel less guilty for their sin? When I tell them that they are living in sin, voluntarily and wickedly, every hour and moment of their existence, when they can and ought to be constantly loving and serving God, is this likely to make them feel that there is some good thing in them? But, on the other hand, suppose I did tell them that they could *not* obey God; would they not be very likely to suppose that they were doing about as well as they could, and that there *was* something, after all, pretty good in them?

But perhaps it will be said that by urging the doctrine that men can obey God, I am encouraging them in *presumption*. But how is that? When I tell the sinner that he is, of his own choice, committing sin which deserves the eternal displeasure of God; that he has all his life long been treasuring up wrath, and that God most solemnly declares, unless he repents, he *shall meet* that wrath, is this likely to induce the sinner to cherish any presumptuous hopes of the mercy of God? Surely, if any truth could *shake* his presumption, and make him tremble, and seek to be reconciled to God, this would do it. On the contrary, I should suppose, if I told the sinner that, let him do his best, he could *not* obey, I was taking the very course to encourage the most presumptuous hope that he had little to fear from the wrath of God for not doing impossibilities.

But it is said I thus at least encourage the sinner to *defer the work of repentance*, because he can do it at any time. He will say, "Why should I trouble myself about it now, when I can do it at any convenient opportunity?" It is true, I do tell the sinner to repent, and that he *can* repent, but I also tell him that every hour's continuance in impenitence most fearfully diminishes the probability that he ever *will* do it; that he is so firmly, and yet so voluntarily, fixed in his guilty love of the world, and love of sin, that he *never will turn at all*, unless the Spirit of God influences him; that the hope of salvation is just in proportion to the *earnestness* with which he now wakes up to these things; that he is

every day provoking God to leave him to hardness of heart and blindness of mind; that God would do perfectly right now to leave him; and that there is a fearful probability that God will for ever leave him unless he turns speedily. And will such considerations induce men to *defer* the work of repentance?

But suppose I told him that he *could not* repent, would that probably induce him to try to repent? Would not that rather be the way to make him defer the work? Would he not think, "Well, I have nothing to do then but to wait and wait, and perhaps God will send his Spirit to turn my heart?" Nay, is it not that very delusion which has induced nearly every impenitent sinner here present to defer his repentance up to this hour? Is not that very thing stupifying your hearts, and deadening the influences of the truth?

But it may be objected, that I *disparage the grace of God;* that if I tell men they can obey God, they will ascribe their salvation to themselves, and not to God. But in reply to this, I merely ask, what *is* the grace of God? Grace is the *bestowment of undeserved favors.* Now then let us suppose two characters introduced into heaven; the eternal doors of that city, where God in his glory dwells, are thrown open, and at once the redeemed spirits are fanned by the breezes of heaven; harmonious music from ten thousand golden harps bursts upon their ears, and heaven's high arches ring with the joyous welcome, that other sons have come home to glory.—*One* remembered that on earth he was the voluntary enemy of God; that with full power to obey, he started even in the morning of life in a course of the most wicked rebellion; that the offers of heaven he often and voluntarily scorned; that even the very God whom he now beholds as a reconciled Father, he had chosen to disobey; had actually and voluntarily preferred sin, when he might have loved and obeyed; that for such a malignant rebel the Son of God descended from heaven and died; and that to such a perverse and scornful sinner was the Spirit of God sent: when he was mad in his rebellion, hateful in his voluntary guilt, God had compassion on him, and by his Spirit subdued his enmity, and rescued him from the hell he deserved. What matchless grace! what infinite love! And now suppose the other stands by his side and reflects, "This God sent me into the world with sin created in me; so that it was utterly *impossible* for me to obey his laws. He was therefore bound in *justice* to remove all obstacles to my salvation; it was nothing more than my just claim that he should, by his Son and by his Spirit, help me to do that which I could not do. *I therefore stand here by as good a right as any of those spirits who have never sinned!*" Which now, think you, would feel that he was most indebted to grace for his salvation? Which would raise the highest notes of praise to him who redeemed them with his own blood? Which would find eternity too short to discover the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God in Christ?

The *third*, and only remaining argument which I have to present is, *the plain declaration* of Scripture. No one can deny that God has given to men certain explicit commands:—Love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart; whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God; cast away your transgressions: make you a new heart: repent, and be converted. None will deny that these commands exist; and so perfectly explicit are they, that not even the most determined caviller can have any doubt as to their meaning.

Now men either can or cannot obey these commands. If they can, then, of course, the question is settled at once. If they cannot, then there is no getting away from this dilemma:—God has commanded men to do that which he knew they could not do; which he had no expectation that they ever would or could do, and then has threatened them with his eternal displeasure, unless they do impossibilities.

This is a result which cannot be evaded: the simple representation which it gives of the character of God, is that of a moral governor commanding impossibilities, when he knew them to be impossibilities, and sending sinners to hell for not doing impossibilities.

Now, I ask, is he such a being? It will not answer to resolve all into the mysterious sovereignty of God: here is no mystery; here is plain *injustice*, which we can see and understand to be injustice; injustice which even an earthly tyrant would scorn.—Again, then, I ask, is God such a being?

Every command, then, in the Bible, is a plain and explicit declaration of the truth I am endeavoring to maintain; a declaration, on God's part, that he does consider his creatures able to obey. Nay, the very words of the law prove the doctrine. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy heart*." What is meant by all thy heart? Simply this, that we shall love the Lord our God with all the heart we have, i. e. with all the power of loving we have. When we have done this, we have done all we are required to do, be it more or less. In short, the amount of the law, in the very words of the law, is, that men shall serve God as well as they can; and is it any strange doctrine, that men can obey God, when God only requires them to do all they can?

Thus have I endeavored to show how admirably and beautifully this doctrine harmonizes with all the other doctrines of Scripture; how the consciousness of men bears witness to the truth; how it entirely clears away all the cavils and objections which men are accustomed to urge against the doctrines of the Bible; how it places in the pure light of holiness and benevolence all the dealings and government of God; and magnifies the grace of God in the salvation of men.

But you will perceive, too, that this doctrine bears hard upon the impenitent sinner. If what I have said be true, then, for aught I see, he is stripped of every excuse; cannot find a single refuge to flee to, where he can screen himself from guilt, or find one cavil against his God.

But you will observe that it bears hard upon him in a way of which he cannot complain. It is not like some hard doctrine of which he complains; and the hardness of which consists in this, that if true, he can say that he is treated harshly and unjustly.

But it shows that God treats him fairly and mercifully; and that he only is

to blame. If I am right in my position, then the impenitent sinner is placed in the attitude of open and voluntary rebellion against God. God is right, and he is wrong. He is voluntarily opposed to God, the greatest and the best of beings; he is daily transgressing a law, which it is for his own interest and happiness to obey; he is refusing to repent, when nothing is more reasonable than that he should be truly sorry for doing wrong; he persists in doing so, when he is plainly told that the consequence will be the eternal misery of hell; this course he will follow, even when he can turn about and be saved.

In conclusion, my impenitent friends, I have a few plain truths to state to you, and which you will see to be the necessary inferences from what I have said. If you finally go to perdition, you only receive the just reward of your deeds; for you *would* go. No resistless decree of heaven sent you there: no refusal to perform impossibilities: no unfortunate depravity, which you could not help, kindled the fires of hell. But you plunged yourself into the pit; and as the bars of the eternal prison close against you for ever, as the last glimmer of light and joy fades upon your despairing eye, and the arrows of the Almighty drink up your spirits, how keen and bitter will be the reflection that you have ruined and undone yourself.

Another serious thing I have to say to you is, that whenever you excuse yourself from instant compliance with the command of God, by saying, *I cannot*, it is the mere refuge of indolence, depravity, and rebellion. The only reason why you do not obey God is that *you will not*.

I know when I say this, that the greater part of the impenitent sinners in this house are making this excuse, and this is the way in which you are smoothing over the matter with conscience, and keeping yourself quiet in sin. I know, too, that many of you will say, we are not conscious of any such rebellious determination not to serve God. Just as ten thousand, whom we are constantly meeting with, habitually live under the influence of the most hateful passions, and yet are apparently unconscious of it all the while. Still it is true, as that the throne of God shall endure for ever, that the only reason why you do not obey God is that *you will not*. Here I fasten the charge of depravity. You are willing to acknowledge yourself a sinner in general terms, and speak much of your unfortunate depravity. But the real truth is, you are such a desperate sinner that you *can obey God*, and *will not*.

Another charge which I have to bring against you is, that when you say "you wish to be a Christian, but cannot,—you would be glad to be a better man, but cannot," you say that which is not true. You do not really wish to be a Christian. The only reason why you are not a Christian is, that you are not willing to be. Never yet was a man prevented by any thing but his own voluntary choice from being a Christian. True, you would like well enough to be a Christian, if it could be done without any trouble, or any giving up of sinful and beloved gratifications. You would be glad to be sure of *heaven*, while living in sin.

O sinner! it is high time that you give up your vain excuses, and begin heartily to serve God. Long enough have you been throwing

the blame of your sins upon Him. Long has he in infinite mercy been waiting upon you to repent. Beware lest, if you longer abuse his grace, he should swear in his wrath you shall never enter into his rest.

Cannot! Never was there a more artful and lying suggestion of Satan. Once entrenched here, nothing can move you. Does conscience begin to sting?—all is quieted, at once, by the soothing lullaby, *I cannot.* Does the faithful preacher urge home the obligations of religion? *I cannot*, at once allays all convictions and all apprehensions.

Ah! wretched, deluded mortals! led captive by Satan, at his will: what shadows you are, and what shadows you pursue, while durable riches are slighted. What toil, and bustle, and activity for the things of this life, while *you will not come to Christ, that you may have life eternal.* All nature resounds with the hum and din of business. And what is it all for? For things which you may never obtain: which, if you could obtain, you cannot keep; and if you could keep, would only sting and disappoint you. Why will you keep on, and die in your sins? Why not taste of purer joys, and accept of peace and eternal happiness?

But O, if you will not, God is clear; his throne is guiltless. And if now the heaving earth and opening graves should announce the morning of the resurrection; if the breaking heavens should reveal the descending Judge, and all the impenitent begin to feel that "the great day of his wrath was come," we must still say, and for ever say, "GOD IS RIGHT, AND THE WORLD IS WRONG"—"Just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints."

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SERMON CLIII.

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PRIVATE PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 6.—*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.*

Private prayer, in distinction from family, social, and public prayer, is founded on the private and personal wants, sins, and obligations of men. In discoursing upon the subject, it seems in order, to speak,

I. Of the place. "Enter into thy closet"—thy retired chamber, or secret apartment. Be alone. This direction was originally given in opposition to the publicity of prayer as offered by the Pharisees in "synagogues and at the corners of the streets." The direction may be easily complied with by those who have a home suited to their convenience. No matter what room, chamber, or part of the house it be, provided you can be alone. But if, like the Savior, you have not "where to lay your head," if your house furnishes no conveniences, or circumstances prevent retirement at home; then you may select any other spot which will afford retreat from observation. Jesus often made a mountain, a wilderness, a garden, his closet; and many of his followers have made theirs in out-houses, caverns, groves, and under the open canopy of heaven.

"Where'er we seek him, he is found,
And every place is holy ground."

But the question may here be asked; ought we studiously to conceal our private devotions? Or if we cannot be strictly private, may we omit them? My opinion is, we ought to do nothing with the intention of having it known that we pray in secret; but select our place for the exercise so as to be least likely to attract notice, and regulate our voice so as not to be overheard, except by him who heareth in secret. Yet obviously, every person in a family, who daily and regularly retires for prayer, is liable to be known so to do;—but this furnishes no good reason why he should neglect the duty.

II. The time for private prayer. The importance of having a

stated and regular time, must be obvious to all. We shall then be sure not to forget or neglect the duty. If we have no definite rule on the subject, but leave the time for prayer to be decided by circumstances, it will generally be an irregular, hurried, and unprofitable service; our minds will often be in an unsettled state, and whether to pray now or at another time, will be a question so frequently recurring, that we shall probably dismiss the duty altogether, to relieve ourselves from embarrassment.

But *when* shall the time be fixed? Nature and scripture point out morning and evening as the most suitable seasons. In the morning, some will find it best to pray on first rising from their beds; others, after attending to necessary domestic cares. In the evening, many can most advantageously do it about the going down of the sun; but others, not till all the labors of the day are finished. Let me only suggest, that you should sacredly guard the fixed times for prayer against the encroachments of the world. If possible, let not worldly business be pushed so hard and so late as to unfit your soul for its evening offering; let not evening company, visits, or even religious meetings, destroy your relish or waste your strength for secret devotion.

Is it next asked, how *frequently* shall we pray? This depends so much on circumstances, that no rule applicable to all can be given. David says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, he shall hear my voice." Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks." "Cornelius, a devout man, prayed to God always:" that is, as I understand it, at the stated hours of prayer observed by the Jews—three times a day. Peter was engaged in private prayer "about the sixth hour," or noon. Most saints, distinguished for a close walk with God, have thrice a day entered into their closets. "I have found the benefit of your advice," said a young Christian to his pastor, "in adding noon to my former seasons of prayer, morning and evening." As a general rule, morning and evening must not be dispensed with;—and whoever can, consistently with his other duties, retire like David and Daniel, at noon also, will find as a consequence,

> "Sweet pleasures rise from things unseen,
> Beyond this world of time."

It may further be inquired, *how much* time shall be devoted to this sacred exercise? On this point too, the Scriptures are not explicit. It must depend, in a measure, on the nature and number of other duties; on the specific objects for which we pray; and in some degree on the spirit and feelings of the occasion. When we have unusual freedom and fervor—when we most intensely desire some spiritual benefit, or when great results are depending—then more time than ordinary ought to be devoted to it. Before Christ chose his twelve apostles, he spent a whole night in prayer. Jacob, at Penuel, intent on securing the blessing of the Angel of the covenant, continued his supplication till break of day. Colonel Gardiner, whose engagements were often such that he could have but one season of retirement a day, used to spend two hours in devotion before going out in the morning. Martin Lu-

ther thought three hours every day were little enough to spend in prayer. These were noble examples; let those who can, imitate them. There is very little danger, in these days of spiritual declension, of erring in spending too much time in this service. The danger all lies on the other side. I admire the rule observed by the pious Bradford; "he would not give over confessing any sin, till he felt some brokenness of heart for it, and would not cease praying for a particular blessing, till he felt some relish of it in his soul." Were it needful to express a more decided opinion in regard to the time to be spent in secret devotion, at each season, I would give that of the author of "Advice to a Young Christian:" *It is good to stipulate with yourself for half an hour.* This time, at least, may be profitably occupied in self-examination and reading the Scriptures, together with prayer.

Two questions of a practical kind may here be asked. First, Should we so strictly observe set times for prayer, as to attempt the duty, if we do not feel the spirit of prayer; or, as some express it, are not moved by the Spirit to pray? To which I answer, unquestionably we should: for our *feelings* can never be made the standard of our duty. And if we feel a reluctance to pray, it is evident we have then some sin to confess and some blessing to crave; so that we need, it may be, to pray the more. Besides, if we adopt the rule, to pray only when we happen to *feel* like it, Satan and a wicked heart will allow us but few opportunities. I once knew a Christian female who was induced to act on this unscriptural rule, of praying only when "the Spirit moved her to do it;" and she became the prey and sport of temptation, and was for a long time left in a state of most distressing gloom and doubts, of her piety. You might as well neglect public worship, family prayer, reading the Scriptures, and every other duty which you owe to God, or your fellow-men, when you happen to feel disinclined or backward to it, as to neglect private prayer for this reason.

The second question is, Whether those who join in family prayer ought also to pray in secret; especially, ought he to do it who leads the family devotions? Certainly, as a general rule; because the design of family prayer is different from that of private; and no one can offer such a kind of prayer in the presence of others, as the private and personal wants of his soul demand. You can no more make family prayer a substitute for private, than you can public prayer, for family; or preaching on the Sabbath, for the private reading of the Scriptures. In short, you can never throw the personal concerns of your soul into a common stock with a family, or even a church, so as to render private prayer needless. The publican spoke what his own heart felt, when he smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" No one could possibly have uttered that prayer in the publican's behalf.

Thus far I have spoken only of the ordinary seasons of prayer; but besides these, there are special and extraordinary ones, which every Christian will need to observe: such was that of David, when he prayed for the life of his child; of Daniel, when he set his face to seek the Lord God for the return of the Jews from captivity; and of

Nehemiah, when he was about to make request to King Artaxerxes. Our Savior engaged in special prayer at the time of his baptism; before electing his twelve apostles; on the mount of transfiguration; and during his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. So ought we to observe special seasons of prayer. How obviously suitable is it, that more time should be spent on the Sabbath in secret devotion, than can be ordinarily on other days! Who but must pray more when about to begin an important and difficult enterprise, or to assume weighty responsibilities, or in a season of great domestic affliction, or of general attention to religion, than he does ordinarily? And under a penitential sense of past unfaithfulness and present sin, it is suitable and even necessary for individuals to observe days of fasting and special prayer, for the pardoning mercy of God.

III. Let us next consider some of the PECULIAR ADVANTAGES of private prayer.

It allows of *much greater freedom* than we can use at other times. Both in social and family prayer—much more in public—we are restrained from confessing our personal sins, except in general terms: we must then, also, suit our expressions to the wants and circumstances of our fellow-worshippers. But when alone, with no hearing ear but that of God, with no eye but his upon us, we can, without fear or restraint, pour out our complaints, make to him our confessions, and tell him all our wants and our sorrows. You well know with what freedom you converse when alone with your best friend—so it is with the soul in solitary communion with God. Oh, could you sometimes listen at the closet door of a Christian, what heart-affecting confessions would you hear! what sighs and groans of penitence! what earnest cries for pardon! what importunity in supplication for others; what grateful acknowledgments; what outpouring of the whole heart to God!

Private prayer has also a most happy influence upon a person's *feelings* and *temper*. How soothing and invigorating in the morning, to hold a season of retired communion with God; to give him thanks for the mercies of the night; to implore his guidance through the day; his defence against temptations, and his grace, as a shield, against sin! With what cheerfulness too may a Christian go out from his closet to engage in the duties, and to meet the dangers and trials of the day before him! And when he retires from his labors at evening, and in his closet has held communion with his covenant God; then with an approving conscience and heavenly calmness, he commits himself to the divine protection, and lays his head upon his pillow! Account for it as you may—I believe the fact is unquestionable—that private prayer so regulates and tranquillizes the mind, gives it such a balance, self-possession, and reliance on divine aid, that it happily fits a person for the performance of his most common duties, and enables him to accomplish more and do it better than he otherwise could. What but prayer gave Nehemiah such firmness in building the walls of Jerusalem amid insults and opposition? What else enabled Daniel to brave the horrors of the lions' den? Sir Matthew Hale, in his letters to his chil-

dren, says; "If I omit praying and reading a portion of God's blessed Word in the morning, nothing goes well with me all the day." Dr. Boerhaave said, "that his daily practice of retiring for an hour in the morning, and spending it in devotion and meditation, gave him firmness and vigor for the business of the whole day." Dr. Doddridge used frequently to observe, "that he never advanced well in human learning without prayer; and that he always made the most proficiency in his studies when he prayed with the greatest fervency." Luther had written on the door of his study, "Bene orasse, est bene studuisse"—*To have prayed well, is to have studied well.* How well does the experience of Christians, in the more retired and ordinary walks of life, accord with the facts above mentioned. Have you not found that daily private devotion has the effect of composing your mind and giving you vigor in business? When you neglect it or hurry it over, do you not feel the sad effects in a discomposed frame, a disturbed conscience, and in unsteadiness of purpose? Those of you who wholly neglect private prayer, may think little of this advantage of it:—you, perhaps, feel able to pursue your labors and meet the trials and temptations of life without God's blessing—but, alas! you may learn, when too late to profit by it, how unwisely you judge, and how presumptuously you act.

Again,—Private prayer is one of the most important means of *growth in grace.* As the affections which are then called forth are fresh, lively, and vigorous, and as a corresponding impression is felt on the heart that exercises them; the closet hence becomes an index of a person's spirituality. His evidences of personal holiness and of progress in religion brighten or grow dim, very much in proportion to his faithfulness in private devotions. "Apostacy," says Mr. Henry, "begins at the closet door." If, my brethren, I knew the history of your closets—if I knew the frequency of your visits there—the time you spend—the motives that influence you—the manner in which you conduct while there; I should not fear to hazard an opinion respecting the state of your souls! Your comparative improvement in the Christian life might, by this test, very accurately be judged of. Of some of you, I trust, it would be manifest, that you "are growing up to the measure of the stature of perfect ones in Christ Jesus;" of others, I fear, that your growth is exceedingly slow, almost imperceptible; and of others still, that the graces of the Spirit, if alive at all, are languid and withered.

Private prayer, moreover, *procures the blessing of God upon others.* All the promises to prayer in general, may be claimed for prayer offered in secret. In that hallowed retreat, the Christian has power with God; there "he moves the hand that moves the world." Feeble as the instrumentality is, in itself; yet, through the promise of God, its results are great and lasting on the conversion of sinners; the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom; the peace and welfare of mankind upon earth, and their destiny in eternity!

I only add—*great is the reward* promised to him that prayeth in secret. "Thy father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

There, truly, he manifests himself to his supplicating children, in the endearing character of FATHER! There, he inspires them with confidence to cry, "Abba, Father!"—and there he gives them an earnest of the joys which are "at his right-hand." Turn to the closet experience of almost any Christian, and how comforting and joyful is it often! "I would not," says a lady, in her diary—"I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds. I never enjoy such hours of pleasure, and such free and entire communion with God, as I have here; and I wonder that any can live prayerless, and deprive themselves of the greatest privilege allowed them." "In prayer," says the missionary Martyn, "I had a most precious view of Christ, as a friend that sticketh closer than a brother! I hardly know how to contemplate with praise enough his adorable excellences. Who can show forth all his praise? I can conceive it to be a theme long enough for eternity. I want no other happiness, no other sort of heaven!" Brainerd, in his journal, records; "I spent an hour in prayer with great intenseness and freedom, and with the most soft and tender affection towards mankind. O! it is an emblem of heaven to love all the world with a love of kindness, forgiveness, and benevolence. My soul was sweetly resigned to God's disposal of me—I confided in him that he would never leave me, though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death." How often did Payson write in his journal, "Had a sweet season in prayer this morning, and felt fervent love to my Savior, and desires that he might be glorified." But why should I multiply examples? Have you not experienced in your own souls the blessed reward of prayer in secret? Do you not know what the presence of God means? what communion of soul with him is? Have you never, in the closet, seen his goodness pass before you? never had, while there, sweet foretastes of heaven, and joyous anticipations of that "open reward," which he will give you in the presence of congregated worlds? That reward, I conceive, will be the same in kind as that which you now receive. It will be *open*, that is, public and manifest to the whole intelligent universe. Then you will receive an answer to all your prayers, in a full justification before God, complete sanctification, confirmation in holiness, and in being admitted to his immediate "presence, where is fulness of joy, and to a seat at his right-hand, where are pleasures for evermore."

Having thus offered some suggestions relative to the duty of private prayer, and exhibited the advantages of it, I would, in conclusion,

First, address all the members of this church who are present. Beloved brethren, do you pray in your closets? From many hearts, I hear the reply, "We do." Have you stated and regular hours for this duty? are you punctual in it? do you take sufficient time? do you not neglect the service, when your affections are languid, or because you pray in your family? do you observe any special seasons of prayer; and do you occasionally unite fasting with this exercise? I would also ask, my brethren, what advantages do you derive from private prayer? Can you pour out your soul with freedom before God in private? do *you derive from* it a happy influence on your feelings and temper; and

does it prove to you one important means of growth in grace? Do you enjoy the devotions of the closet; find nearness to God there, and experience in your soul that peace and joy, that resignation to the divine will, love to mankind and foretaste of heavenly bliss, which other Christians have experienced, and which are a part of the reward promised to secret prayer? If, brethren, you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, what is the reason? Is there no efficacy or use in prayer? or has the promise of God failed? Rather, is there not a fault and a failure in you? Examine yourselves. If you daily enter into your closet, and yet derive no benefit from the duty, and find no enjoyment there, you may be sure that "sin lieth at the door," and that "your iniquities separate between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Does not conscience accuse you of living in some allowed sin, either towards God, or your neighbor, or both? Do you cherish no secret sin,—indulge no vicious appetite,—gratify no unhallowed lust? Do you live in peace and love with your Christian brethren, and in charity with all men? Is there no command or divine institution which you disregard? Do you set your heart upon the discharge of every known duty, and "herein exercise yourself to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men?" If, on examination, conscience accuses you of living in any sort of sin, then you may know the true reason why your closet devotions are barren and joyless. Let it be written in large capitals on your closet door, "IF I REGARD INIQUITY IN MY HEART, THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR ME."

Do any of you, who are members of this church, wholly neglect private prayer? I pause—and tremble for the reply. I seem to hear one, and another, and yet another, answer, "I do—I confess I do." What, then, is your experience? What progress do you make in spiritual religion? What do you know of communion with God? How do you honor your religious professions before the world? I would also seriously and affectionately ask you, Why you do not pray in secret? Have you no need? no time? no desire! Then, how do you know you are a Christian? from what do you infer it? on what evidence do you rely? It is a mark of the hypocrite, "that he does not always call upon God;" and I beseech you examine well, and see if this is not a conclusive mark against you.

Are there any present who formerly prayed in secret, but now neglect the duty? My friends, have you proved the promises of God to be deceptive? If not, why do you forsake the place once consecrated to prayer? Are not your wants as great now as ever? Have you no sins to be forgiven? Has that soul, whose infinite worth you once felt, lost its value? Can you now brave the terrors of death, and go, without another prayer, to the tribunal of God, your Judge? Can you be willing that it should be recorded against you in the book of God's remembrance—This is the man that once bowed unto me in his closet; that once cried for pardoning mercy; that once sued for an interest in the Savior's love: but afterward shut, no more to open, his closet door; broke his most solemn vows; committed again

the sins, for the pardon of which he had prayed, and turned away from the Savior, whose merits and righteousness were proffered to him. Oh! my friends—return, return speedily to prayer! Peradventure there is yet hope! "Seek the Lord while he is yet to be found; call ye upon him while he is yet near."

Finally—Are there any who have hitherto neglected private prayer? any so busy in the pursuits or pleasures of the world, that they find no time for this duty? any so thoughtless of their immortal destiny, and of the account which they must soon give at the bar of God, as not to feel the need of it? Is there one who up to the present time has had no closet for private prayer, and no heart for the duty—to him would I speak. Oh! wert thou soon to be visited with sickness—to see ghastly death approaching to seize thee—how would thy cries ascend to God for mercy! Thou wouldst not, methinks, be willing to die, without at least one prayer. The cry would be extorted from thee, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"—"Lord, save, or I perish!" If such would be thy cry in death, when probably it would be unavailing, why not make it now, while there is hope? Now God is on the throne of mercy, and through Jesus the Mediator, thou canst have access to him. He waits to be gracious; he is ready to hear, and pardon, and save the penitent suppliant. But soon he will be seated on the throne of judgment! No prayer will then avail. Thy cries will be lost, amid groans of despair, the sound of the last trumpet, and the convulsions of a ruined world! Call then upon him now. He bends from his mercy-seat to hear and save! Let the prayer of thy heart, offered in silence here, be repeated, and urged with fresh importunity in thy closet at home. Henceforth let that be said of thee, that was said of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth." Daily, to the end of life, "enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father who seeth in secret, and he will reward thee openly." AMEN.

SERMON CLIV.

BY REV. NATHANIEL BOUTON.

SOCIAL PRAYER.

MATT. xviii. 19, 20.—*Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

I HAVE selected this passage as the foundation of a discourse on SOCIAL PRAYER. If, in the first place, you ask, wherein this kind of *prayer differs* from other kinds, it will be sufficiently explicit to say;

it differs from secret prayer, in that two or more are united in it; from family prayer, in that it is not offered by the master or head of a family, as such, at the stated hours of morning and evening devotions; but by persons, however related, who are agreed to pray for blessings which they desire in common. And it differs from public prayer, in that it is offered in more retired places, and at times not particularly enjoined by divine or human authority. Meetings for such prayer may be stated or occasional—may be held for *special* purposes: as to beseech God to avert his judgments; to grant wisdom and guidance in times of doubt and difficulty; to save the church from divisions, or declensions; or to revive the spirit of true religion. Or such meetings may be held for objects of ordinary interest and utility; as the promotion of Christian fellowship, improvement in personal piety, the success of the word preached, and of other means employed for the advancement of true religion.

In the next place, it may be asked, what *warrant* have we for this kind of prayer? To which I answer,

First, it is warranted by the social nature of our religion: we are brethren, and as such it is suitable we should meet for prayer, as well as for other religious services; we have common interests, and these can with the greatest advantage be pleaded before the throne of grace in union. Suppose Christians, enjoying the hope of heaven should live without any intercourse. Each one alone cultivates as he is able the graces of the Spirit; but together they hold no religious conversation; meet on no occasions for Christian fellowship; but, in respect to their religion, are as much alone as the recluse in a wilderness. Is it not manifest that in such a case they would be greatly deficient in some parts of Christian character? Where would be that "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit," which is enjoined? or love to the brotherhood, or bearing one another's burdens, or weeping with them that weep, or rejoicing with them that rejoice, or forbearing one another and forgiving one another, or preferring others to themselves, or even praying one for another? In the case supposed, not one of the social duties of religion could be duly performed; nor one of the social religious affections properly exercised. To live thus, therefore, unless it were necessary, would be contrary to the very nature of our religion.

But we have also express *Scripture* warrant for social prayer. The text is in point: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "If two of you shall agree on earth, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven." Now, supposing that this passage has primary reference to prayer for miraculous interposition; yet it recognises union in that exercise—it is *social* prayer which most effectually secures such aid. But neither the language of the text, nor the connection in which it stands, restricts the meaning to prayer for miraculous purposes. Agreement touching "any thing" that they shall ask, is too comprehensive a phrase to be restricted simply to things which it requires miraculous power to accomplish; and the promise,

"where"—wherever on earth—"two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"—that promise is too broad to be limited to the twelve apostles, or to the short period in which miracles were continued in the church. The language which is used need only be restricted by the nature of the case, or by other passages of Scripture. Thus we know that the promise to grant "any thing" touching which two shall agree in prayer, must be limited to things lawful and proper—to things which on the whole will be for God's glory; and the prayer must be offered in faith and submission, as well as in union.

We have, moreover, *examples* of social prayer in Scripture. Immediately after the ascension of Christ, the disciples in an upper room "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." On the day of Pentecost, "they were all with one accord in one place." Peter and John, being let go from the Jewish council, went to their own company, and reported all that had been done, and said to them —"and they all lifted their voice with one accord," in prayer to God. When Peter was put in prison by Herod, "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him;" not however in one public assembly, but in retired social meetings: for after his release he found, in the "house of Mary the mother of John, many were gathered together praying for him." Daniel and his three friends were accustomed to meet for prayer on occasions of special interest. Esther engaged her brethren in fasting and praying, while she went uncalled into the presence of the king; and Nehemiah and his countrymen made their united prayer to God for success in building the walls of Jerusalem. These scriptural examples, the text, and the social nature of our religion, are then a sufficient warrant for *social prayer.*

In the third place, I would offer a few suggestions *on the principles* upon which meetings for social prayer may be formed and regulated.

They should be *voluntary;* that is, should be commenced and continued in accordance with the wishes and hearty consent of those interested in them. The Scriptures speak of social prayer in a different manner from what they do of other religious services. The language is, "If two of you *are agreed.*" "They were with *one accord* in one place." On general grounds, we may urge social prayer as a duty binding on the conscience. We may say it is our duty to use all suitable means of religious improvement, and to advance the Redeemer's kingdom; and as social prayer conduces to these ends, we ought to engage in it spontaneously.

But further,—the meetings, being voluntarily commenced, should be regularly attended. Why agree to begin, unless determined to continue? If the object for which you agree to pray is good, it should be persevered in till accomplished. To absent yourselves from the place of prayer, because you do not feel the Spirit of devotion, or because attendance requires a little self-denial, is disheartening to others, and may destroy the meeting itself. For "two or three" are requisite for social prayer, and when you are absent without a substantial reason, *how do you know* that enough will be together to claim the promise?

But again, there should be union as to the *object* of a social prayer meeting. Let the question of the members be, for what do we meet? —What do we agree to pray for? In deciding this, take comprehensive views of your own circumstances, of the church, and of the world. As to the various subjects of prayer, it may be said, "the field is the world." But out of this spacious field, you should select some one or more objects, which shall be the burden of your prayer. You may pray for your own growth in grace, for your brethren, for the conversion of your children, friends, or neighbors; for a revival of religion, for the success of missions, for ministers of the gospel, for the universal diffusion of gospel light, and the triumphant reign of the Redeemer on earth. But it is essential to the profit and interest of social prayer that the object of the meeting be well understood and adhered to.

Let the prayers also be pertinent; for example, if you meet to pray for a revival of religion in the church or town where you reside, limit your petitions mainly to that subject, and not embrace other topics which have no connection with it. If you agree to pray for the conversion of your children and friends—it is obviously unsuitable that the chief part of your prayer consist in the confession of your sins, or in thanks for personal favors, or in petitions for the conversion of the heathen. When Queen Esther went in unto the king, it is probable that the prayers offered by her countrymen were solely for her success. When Daniel and his three friends agreed to pray that God would reveal to them the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, other topics were omitted. The prayers offered by the church for Peter when in prison were for his safety and release.

If the object of the meeting be understood, and the prayers be appropriate, they will generally be brief. If you enjoy an uncommon fulness and enlargement of desire in prayer for a particular blessing, there is little danger of wearying those with whom you join; but if you introduce topics foreign to the object of your meeting, your prayers will be extended to such a length as to become wearisome and unprofitable.

Further, it is desirable that social prayer meetings be so organized and conducted, *that all may, in turn,* if they will, *take a part.* Where the meeting is made up of both males and females, it belongs to the former only to lead in prayer; but females may, with great propriety, meet by themselves, and engage in this exercise. But when met, let all, if they will, take a part. Some are timid, and need encouragement; some inexperienced, and need practice; some backward in duty, and ought to be brought forward; some have too low a sense of their ability, and need to acquire confidence. If each in turn is expected to pray, or is called upon to do it, the gifts of all may be duly exercised and improved, and a common advantage gained. Still the meeting should be so free, that those who attend shall not feel obliged to take a part, or be excluded; for there are persons who enjoy great satisfaction in hearing and uniting with others in prayer, who cannot, or think they cannot, themselves pray to edification.

As to the *frequency* of social prayer meetings, no definite rules can be given. In general, it is desirable to meet as often at least as once a week. But the frequency must be determined by the circumstances of those who attend—by their nearness to each other, their domestic duties and relations, their secular engagements, their other opportunities for religious improvement, and by the state of religion in the society where they belong. Sometimes such meetings may properly be held three or four times a week, but I cannot deem it proper to neglect any domestic or other known duty, for the sake of attending so frequently. In this, as well as in other cases, wisdom must direct, and "happy is he who condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth."

Permit me also to suggest a few cautions in regard to social prayer meetings. One is, guard against *formality*. A meeting commenced for a particular object may for a while interest you; but the danger is, that after a while your prayers will be languid and formal—that the life and spirit will be gone, while the bare form remains. Better in such a case to vary in some measure the object of your meeting; create a new interest, and stir up each other's minds by new motives. In this connection I may also remark, that it is well, for the sake of variety and interest, to introduce free religious conversation and singing between the prayers which are offered.

Be cautious, also, lest you measure your religion and that of others by social prayers. If you conclude you are a sincere and growing Christian, merely because you are a frequent attendant on social prayer —and especially if you judge others harshly, who are less engaged in this exercise than yourself, you have much reason to suspect your heart of pride and self-righteousness. Remember that the Pharisees prayed "to be seen of men." Examine into your private devotions. Do you love your closet, as well as the social prayer meeting? Are you as careful to live holy in the world as you are to be present at the house of prayer?

Be cautious, also, lest you undervalue the public worship of God, in which you do not take an active part. In nothing is spiritual pride more manifest than in a disposition to magnify our own gifts, and disparage those of others. There are not wanting instances in which persons who have successfully exercised their gifts in social meetings, have acquired such conceited notions of their abilities, that they have absented themselves from the public worship of God, and set up for spiritual guides. If you ever find the thought intruding into your heart, that you can make a social prayer meeting so interesting and profitable as to justify your absence from the public worship of God on the Sabbath; if you are disposed to judge ministers harshly; and if you take more pains to be present at a meeting where you expect to lead, than to be at the sanctuary, where you will only be a hearer, you may be certain that your heart is lifted up with spiritual pride; that Satan has taken the advantage of you, and that your social prayers have become a snare to you. Oh! the pride and deceitfulness of the human heart.

I would now suggest *various inducements* to engage you in social

prayer. And in doing this, I would endeavor to set before you some of the advantages of it. Consider the gracious promise contained in the text. "If two of you shall agree on earth, touching any thing," that is a suitable subject of prayer, "it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." How delightful the thought, that Jesus, as an omnipresent Savior, meets with his praying people where they assemble, in places however remote or obscure. He regards not only the multitude of worshippers assembled in his name on the Sabbath; not only those who meet on great and splendid occasions to celebrate the triumphs of his truth, and the progress of his kingdom—but even two or three met together in a retired room! And oh! how animating the consideration, that at one and the same moment, the cheering presence of Jesus may be felt by the praying companies of his people, however numerous they are, and however retired and unknown to each other. He is present with the little circle that meets in his name in the centre of a city, or a village, or in the thinly inhabited parts of a town. If they feel themselves feeble in gifts, and unworthy to pray—still he is with them. If they are despised by the ungodly, and for their safety are obliged to seek retirement, still they are honored by the presence of him who is King of kings—and whose glory fills the heaven of heavens! Yes,

"Low in the social band he bows
His still attentive ear,
And while his angels sing around,
Delights their voice to hear."

Consider also the *fulness* of the promise: "If two of you are agreed touching any thing, it shall be done." I regard this promise as ensuring efficacy to social prayer, offered in a right manner, for things agreeable to God's will. Not that the blessings craved will always be granted in the way or at the time we may desire: but such united prayer will be heard in heaven, and will be the means of bringing down on the souls of the suppliants, and upon others, the most precious blessings. I agree so entirely with President Edwards on this point, that I cannot forbear quoting his words:—"There is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God, and advance the kingdom of Christ, as by prayer. Let persons be never so weak, and never so mean, and under never so poor advantages to do much for Christ and the souls of men otherwise, yet if they have much of the spirit of grace and supplication, in this way they may have power with him that is infinite in power, and has the government of the word. Though they may be private persons, their prayers are put up in the name of a Mediator, that is a public Person, being the Head of the whole church, and the Lord of the universe: and if they have a just sense of the importance of eternal things, and concern for the precious souls of men, yet they need not regret that they are not preachers; they may go in their earnestness and agonies of soul, and pour out their soul before One that is able to do all things."

Moreover, social prayer has a most happy influence upon the persons engaged in it. It makes them acquainted with each other's religious exercises, opens their hearts to each other's view, produces a strong mutual affection, gives encouragement and boldness in the cause of Christ, prompts to holy zeal and activity, that the objects prayed for may be accomplished; and gives vigorous growth to the affections which are called into exercise by the prayers which are offered for various objects. On these points, I may appeal to experience. Tell me, ye who maintain social prayer, who of all the professed followers of Christ are most dear to your hearts? with whose religious character are you best acquainted?—with whom do you take sweetest counsel?—and of whom, in the fulness of your heart, can each of you most truly say, "I love them in the Lord?" Are they not the very ones whom you are accustomed to meet, not only in the sanctuary and at the communion-table, but also in the room for social prayer? Are they not those with whom you have often bowed at the throne of Grace, and whose supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings have ascended with yours to heaven? Have you not frequently, after having spent an hour in this delightful employment, felt your hearts knit together in love? Have you not lingered, as if reluctant to depart from the consecrated spot, lest you should lose the sweet experience of inward joy? Has not your language, at such seasons, often been,

"When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again."

The lamented missionary Parsons, once speaking of his enjoyment in social prayer, said, "We assembled for prayer, and the Lord was in the midst of us; a smile sat upon the face of the saints: this appeared like the gate to heaven." President Edwards, after having parted with Christian friends with whom he had often conversed and prayed, thus expressed his feelings: "My support was in contemplation of the heavenly state—where is the enjoyment of the persons loved, without ever parting: where those persons who appear so lovely in this world will really be inexpressibly more lovely, and full of love to us. And how sweetly will they who mutually love each other join together in singing the praises of God and the Lamb!"

Further, to see the advantages of social prayer, look at facts which evince that God graciously answers it, and makes it the means of promoting his cause in the world. The united prayers of the primitive disciples, assembled in an upper room at Jerusalem, and afterward on the day of Pentecost, were answered in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the conversion of three thousand souls! In answer to the prayer of the company with whom Peter and John met, "the place was shaken where they assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness." In answer to the social prayers of the church, an angel released Peter from prison. Generally, times of *uncommon* prosperity to the church have *been* times of fervent and importunate social as well as secret and public

prayer. Richard Baxter, in accounting for the extraordinary success which attended his preaching at Kidderminster, says, "One advantage which I had was the zeal and diligence of the godly people of the place. They thirsted after the salvation of their neighbors, and were in private my assistants. Some of them were so able in prayer that very few ministers did equal them in order, and fulness, and apt expression, and holy oratory. Abundance of them were able to pray very laudably with their families and others. Once a week, the younger sort, who were not suitable persons to pray in a public assembly, met among a few, more privately, where they spent three hours in prayer together. Every Saturday night, they met at some of their houses, to pray and prepare themselves for the following day." President Edwards, in his account of the great revival in New-England, about the year 1740, says, "The inhabitants of many of our towns are now divided into particular praying societies; most of the people, old and young, have voluntarily associated themselves in distinct companies, for mutual assistance in social worship, in private houses." Mr. Prince, in his account of the revival in Boston in 1741, says, "Private societies for religious exercises, both of younger and elder persons, both of males and females by themselves, in several parts of the town, now increased to a much greater number than ever." The late Dr. Payson, of Portland, whose preaching was signally blessed during his whole ministry, depended very much for success on the blessing of God in answer to his own and the united prayers of his church. The church was divided into seven districts, and the members of each district met for prayer and conversation once a month; besides a weekly conference and a weekly prayer meeting. At one time, in prospect of a revival, he said, "The church seem to feel in some measure as I could wish. Strong confidence in God, mingled with a deep sense of ill desert, and submission to his will, is displayed by them. They have a prayer meeting every evening." In the published account of the prosperous state of religion in Oneida county, N. Y., in 1826, it is said—"Prayer meetings have been numerous and frequent in most of the churches. In these little circles, Christians have enjoyed the presence of God, and have had great freedom and boldness in approaching the throne of Grace. Never have our churches generally appeared to entertain so delightful and exalted ideas of God as the hearer of prayer."

But why should I multiply examples? It is within your own observation and experience that prayer has power with God. You have seen, and can testify, that when you have been united and importunate in your supplications, the blessing has not been withheld. In the most favored seasons of special divine influences, which we have enjoyed as a church, during six years past, there has been more prayer, secret and social, than at other times. When you have cried unto the Lord, he has hearkened and heard. When two, three, or more of you have been agreed together, touching the revival of God's work—the increase of sanctification in your own souls, and the conversion of sinners—when you have pleaded for these things at the throne of Grace—even while speaking, the Lord has heard, and an answer been granted.

In conclusion, let me propose two distinct objects for social prayer. The first is *a revival of religion among ourselves.* The suspension of divine influence indicates the displeasure of God against his professing people; it is an alarming proof, that we have gone away backward from duty, and that our sins have caused him to hide his face from us! And now, if we would obtain his blessing, as in years which are past, we must, with deep repentance and humility, return and pour out our hearts in supplication before him. In this thing, then, be agreed. Consider, that without the special influence of the Spirit of God, the church can never increase in holiness; no sinners will be awakened and converted; angels will have no occasion to rejoice over scenes which they shall here witness; and heaven will receive no additions from among us, to the number of its blessed inhabitants. Behold the multitudes that seem crowding "the broad road to destruction," insensible of their guilt, and thoughtless of their danger! They draw near to death and hell! Soon they will be past hope—the day of mercy ended—their doom pronounced, and their eternal wail begun! Let the sight of your eye affect your hearts. Together lift up the voice of prayer. "O Lord, revive thy work; in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy!" Let praying companies be formed in every section of the town, to plead with God for an immediate revival of his work. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the midst of us!"

The other object of prayer which I would urge is, *the conversion of the world.* One of the most auspicious "signs of the times" is, that even now, Christians in every part of the world are generally agreed touching this vast and glorious object. The observance of the *Monthly Concert of prayer*, by Christians in Asia, Europe, and America, and in the Islands of the sea, is at once a confirmation of prophecy and a sure harbinger of the Millennium. How glorious the sight, as the sun in his diurnal march looks down upon our fallen world, and beholds, here and there, in every land, throughout his mighty circuit, companies of believers, lifting up their hearts to God in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven!" These prayers mingle as they ascend, and come up before the throne of infinite mercy as one great cloud of incense; and in return the skies pour down righteousness; the earth opens and brings forth salvation." Brethren, let your prayers, at the monthly concert especially, go up to heaven, with the prayers of God's people in all parts of the world! Were all, that in every place call upon the name of the Lord, united in this one object—an object that embraces the salvation of a world, and the infinite glory of the Redeemer—soon the work which Christian benevolence is laboring to accomplish would be done! Such united, universal prayer would move, with a thousand fold rapidity, the moral machinery that is now in motion, and would ensure general and extensive revivals of religion in quick succession; until great voices should be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign *for ever and ever.*"

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SERMON CLV.

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THE GUILT AND MISERY ATTENDANT ON PARENTAL INDULGENCE.

1 Samuel iii. 13—*For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

This fearful denunciation against Eli, the high-priest of Israel, was uttered by the Lord, in his first communication to the youthful prophet Samuel. The character of Eli, as it is briefly sketched in the sacred records, appears to have possessed uncommon excellence. His piety in the sacerdotal office, his ability and integrity as a ruler, and his benevolence and usefulness in every station he occupied, seem to have been worthy of all praise. In many respects also he was a highly favored man. Enjoying the confidence and affection of his whole nation, presiding with distinguished honor over its civil and ecclesiastical affairs, he was finishing a life of active virtue in the calm repose of an honored old age. In these points of view he might well be esteemed the happiest of men, and his life one of singular felicity. But after all, good old Eli did not form an exception to the ordinary destiny. His cup too was dashed with bitterness: his heart was agonized with affliction: amid all the affluence of his comforts and blessings, he too found life a vale of tears: and after his brilliant success—after having reached an age full of honor—his gray hairs were at last brought down with sorrow to the grave. The bane of his enjoyment was in his own family. His peace was poisoned at its fountain. His declining years were rendered wretched, by that most deplorable calamity—the undutiful and wicked conduct of his children. This was the

direful cause that his joys were all blasted, and his heart desolate. What availed wealth, and reputation, and public honors, while the obstinate impiety and profligacy of his sons wrung his soul with anguish? He was doubtless a very tender, affectionate parent. It had been the labor of his life to secure the happiness and welfare of his offspring. With rapture he had watched their unfolding powers—with all a father's partiality he hailed the youthful promise of future excellence. He hoped to enjoy a renewed youth in *their* felicity. All the pictures his fancy drew of a happy old age, were brightened by visions of the joys of his children.

But who can describe the deep anguish he endured, when all these sunny skies, these cheering prospects, were shrouded in gloom by one dark cloud—when these idols of his fondest hope became the authors of severest grief—and when, by their criminal dereliction of every sacred duty, their sacrilegious impiety towards God, and their cruel ingratitude towards himself, his beloved sons pierced his aged bosom with many sorrows?

The course pursued by these young men, though marked by atrocious criminality, was by no means uncommon. Born and educated in the midst of affluence and temptations, dazzled by the prospect of high station and every worldly gratification, it is not wonderful that these youths imbibed false notions, and became thoroughly corrupted in their habits and principles. Human nature was essentially the same three thousand years ago as at the present time. And the fact, that the sons of the chief ruler of Israel became profane and profligate, is to be ascribed to the same moral causes which so commonly render the sons of rich and distinguished families the victims of pride and passion—the miserable votaries of "foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

It might indeed have been expected, that, as these sons of Eli enjoyed the privilege of the best religious instruction, were early habituated to the form and observance of divine worship, and were actually called to officiate in the sanctuary, they would be at least restrained from open wickedness, and preserve the appearance of piety and devotion. But such an expectation is not warranted by the essential principles of human depravity. On the contrary, it is well known, that the most extraordinary religious advantages are often so abused as to become the cause of the most dreadful obduracy. Hence it has been remarked, that some of the vilest men that ever cursed the world have been trained up in the strictest forms of pious instruction. This is far from proving that a religious education is not a most precious blessing. It only proves that the blessed tendency of pious instruction may be fatally resisted by an hostile influence, and that it *may* thus become a savor of death unto death. And it is important to remark here, that where the children of godly parents break through the restraints of early principles, and become, as they sometimes do, pre-eminent in wickedness—there is always discoverable a sufficient cause for such

lamentable apostacy. A close scrutiny will always detect "the dead flies which spoil the ointment." Therewill in every case be found some cardinal error, some grievous deficiency, or some pernicious influence, which is amply sufficient to account for the melancholy result. So that children are never ruined by extraordinary religious advantages—but sometimes they *are* ruined by other causes in spite of such advantages. Such was the history of Eli's sons. Their father's piety, and prayers, and exhortations did not *make* them wicked—but they became so by the force of their own depravity, and the violence of their unrestrained passions, *notwithstanding* all that was done for their preservation.

Who can fail to sympathize with this good old man? His dearest hopes are crushed. His sons, whom he had trained up so carefully, whom he had brought forward in life with such high expectations—to whom he had fondly looked as the props of his age, and as the pillars of the church after his departure—his beloved sons, have become his grief, his reproach, and the guilty authors of impending judgments.

But Eli has a still stronger claim to your sympathy; as the source of his keenest anguish has not yet been mentioned. This was the heart-breaking consciousness, that of all this guilt and misery he himself was the criminal cause; that his failure in duty had been instrumental in the utter ruin of the dearest objects of his affection. This reflection filled the measure of his wo. When the terrible judgments were denounced against his household, when he was told that he should see both his sons cut off by a miserable death, his bosom was doubtless bursting with anguish. But when he was plainly told that his own sin had caused all this accumulated wretchedness, ah! then he felt the direst pang a pious parent's heart can ever know—the agonizing conviction, that a criminal unfaithfulness on his part had brought upon his beloved sons ruin temporal and eternal.

That Eli was deeply and inexcusably criminal in his parental conduct, and that the direct result of his management of his children was their ruin; we have the fullest assurance in the words of our text.—"I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Here we have a threatening of severe judgment upon Eli as a punishment for his indulgence in relation to his sons. This unquestionably proves great criminality; for in the divine government there can be no punishment where there is no sin; therefore, where a terrible infliction is menaced, the guilt must be of an aggravated character. But not only the question of criminality is settled in the text, but there is a direct specification of the particulars in Eli's conduct, which were so reprehensible and so disastrous. Listen to the accusation brought by the Lord himself against this unhappy erring father. He knew the misconduct of his sons, *and he did not restrain them.* Here was the head and front of his offending—this was the root of bitterness which produced such a harvest of guilt and wo. This father could not plead ignorance of his sons' delinquencies, nor of their evil propensities and wicked incli-

nations—of all this he had positive and painful knowledge from their earliest years.

No parent can honestly plead, as an excuse for unfaithfulness towards his children, that he did not know they were wickedly disposed, or that he was not aware of their depraved tendencies and proneness to evil; for every parent, unless he be stone blind, must see such proofs of his children's natural perversity as to afford perpetual demonstration.

Here, then, was the deadly sin of the Jewish high-priest—when his sons were viciously inclined—when he was fully aware of their propensities to evil—*he did not restrain them:* he did not guard them by a vigilant discipline: he did not exert his parental authority to control them, but madly gave them liberty of self-destruction. Appointed to watch over their spiritual safety, he permitted them to rush into the midst of temptation. Entrusted with the guardianship of the life of their souls, he suffered them to wander among beasts of prey. We have a shuddering horror at the thought of the man who exposes his little child in the forest among serpents and tigers, or of him who places a dagger within reach of a person inclined to suicide. But the conduct of the parent who does not restrain his children from evil, is more merciless and destructive.

This treatment of Eli towards his sons proceeded doubtless from excessive fondness and affection—but its effects were ruinous beyond those of the deadliest hatred. Here then we arrive at that fatal misconduct in Eli, which brought perdition upon his sons, and the most tremendous judgments upon his whole family—it was a weak and criminal *parental indulgence.* He knew the wickedness of his sons and he restrained them not. Probably the foundation of all this superstructure of guilt and wo was laid when his sons were children. Then they were the joy of his heart; and he could not be persuaded, that any very depraved propensities, any germs of malignant passions, lurked beneath an appearance so playful and lovely. Hence he weakly indulged all their wayward fancies, gratified their foolish inclinations, overlooked their faults and follies, and absurdly attempted to allure them from vice, and dissuade them from wickedness, by entreaties and flattery. At all their early transgressions he only smiled, and even the first exhibitions of pride, anger, ambition, self-will, stubbornness, and impiety, seemed nothing more in his eyes than the harmless freaks of childhood. He was one of those unwise parents, who think that coercion and correction are wholly unnecessary, and who therefore try the experiment of suffering human nature to take its course, unchecked and uncontrolled.

Thus the sons of Eli grew up in the hot-bed of indulgence, where all their perverse dispositions, all their sinful feelings, all their vicious habits, and all their headstrong passions, acquired an early maturity and an invincible strength. During their boyhood, the pious father kept hoping and hoping for a favorable change—still expecting that the good instructions they had received, and the religious advantages they had enjoyed, would at length exert

a salutary influence; and dreaming that all his ardent hopes would yet be realized. At length however he was roused to the dreadful discovery that these darling children had become hardened, licentious, unprincipled youth, entirely reckless and ungovernable in all their opinions and habits. This distressing disclosure doubtless filled him with unutterable grief and amazement. And yet there was nothing surprising about it; just what he might have expected—the natural result of the course he had adopted—the inevitable fruit of his parental treatment. No one would wonder if a field left to itself should produce thorns, or that a colt untamed and untutored should grow up a wild and worthless animal. Still more inevitable is the result, if a child that is "born as the wild ass' colt," and is permitted to follow his own inclinations, will become a stubborn, bold, bad man.

How keen must have been the agony of Eli's heart, when, at last, too late, he discovered his fatal error—when the truth burst upon him, that the beautiful, playful animals he had been caressing, had become ferocious tigers—that his little sons, whom he had believed so innocent, so untainted and so attractive, were transformed into haughty, unfeeling, licentious, sacrilegious men—utterly beyond all human control—who scorned their father and defied their God! How did he mourn with unavailing grief, that the harvest was past, the summer ended—that his parental influence was lost, irretrievably lost; and that the precious season of controlling their perversity and moulding their characters, was gone by for ever! Alas! poor old man, what consolation can be thine—what can assuage such hopeless sorrows—what balm can heal such wounds? Ah! lay thee down and weep, for thou hast plucked all this ruin upon thine own head—these arrows that pierce thy very soul were sharpened by thyself, and this bitter cup of, grief which thou must drink even to the dregs, has been mingled by thine own hand!

But we are not called to weep for Eli alone. How many parents' hearts in this community are crushed by the same load of anguish—how many families are, like the prophet's roll, filled with lamentation, mourning, and wo, from the same heart-rending cause!

While we thus deeply sympathize in Eli's grief, and cherish the tenderest compassion for his cureless sorrows—let us not forget that he deserved all his sufferings: they were the natural necessary results of his guilty unfaithfulness—his inexcusable neglect of incumbent duty. His conduct was grossly criminal. Because, first, it was absolute disobedience to the positive command of God. The great charge given to parents is, to discipline and restrain their offspring in early life, while the heart may be moulded and while the evil propensities may be overcome. And he who neglects this duty rebels against God, and murders the immortal spirit committed to his care. Because, second, his neglect of duty towards his sons was a breach of the most sacred obligations. Eli possessed the books of Moses, and therefore knew that his children had a corrupt nature and many evil propensities, which must be overcome, or they would certainly be ruined. He knew that it was his office to chasten and subdue them—that their welfare and

happiness, temporal and eternal, depended upon their being early subjected to this salutary control—and that if he failed in this duty, there was none else to perform it, and that the consequence must be most disastrous and lamentable.

It appears further, that the negligence of Eli was criminal; because, thirdly, it was most unjust and cruel towards his sons themselves. His knowledge and experience must have convinced him that the unrestrained passions of youth tend directly to misery and ruin; he must have known that indulgence is the greatest curse that can be inflicted upon children; and yet, to save a momentary pang, to indulge a weak and senseless fondness, or to gratify the present foolish inclinations of his children, he wickedly withheld from them the restraint and discipline so necessary for their good, and left them in fatal liberty to ruin themselves for ever. Can there be more barbarous cruelty than this? Does not such a parent act the part of a relentless demon, rather than a guardian angel?

Finally, the atrocious wickedness of Eli's conduct appears from the consideration that it was rebellion against the divine government, and a fatal perversion of the provisions of divine mercy. Children come into the world feeble and helpless, and the duty devolves upon parents to support and nourish them. If this duty is neglected, they will certainly perish. In like manner, children come into the world under the influence of moral diseases, which must be healed, or they will kill the soul. Certain remedies are provided to check the first symptoms of these maladies as they begin to be developed in childhood. Among these are restraint and correction. And the parent is clothed with absolute authority in order to their administration. The use of the rod, the infliction of personal chastisement, where stubbornness and disobedience require it, are as much ordained of God, and as solemnly incumbent upon parents, as a regular supply of food. All this was known to Eli. Yet he restrained not his sons; he withheld from them the discipline which was indispensable to their safety and happiness, and thus became instrumental in their ruin. What can be more criminal than such a course? If a parent saw his little child going into the fire, or approaching a fatal precipice, or just about to step upon a deadly serpent, and did not instantly and forcibly snatch him from the danger, he would be called a monster. But his conduct is mercy in comparison to that of the father who sees his little son running into sinful courses, acquiring pernicious habits, and exhibiting depraved tempers, and fails to employ the appointed means to restrain and preserve him.

We hasten to conclude our remarks upon this painful history, by glancing at the consequences of this deplorable instance of parental unfaithfulness. Probably there is no class of transgressions so inevitably followed by severe retribution in the present life, so uniformly productive of a direful harvest of keenest wo, as those committed by parents towards their children. Negligence and folly here are

like the frosts of spring, withering and blasting all the treasures of the year.

As all the temporal enjoyments parents can expect in declining years must depend upon the conduct and dispositions of their children; wherever an erroneous or defective course of early discipline has resulted in the formation of characters perverse, violent, unprincipled and immoral, how surely is the whole fabric of domestic bliss shaken to ruins—all the lights of life's evening quenched in darkness, and the heart of parental love, like some deserted mansion, cheerless and desolate, while the mournful forms of departed joys wander about mantled in grief. Oh! is there one bright hope to assuage such anguish, to cheer such a parent's path-way to the tomb? There is one and only one—the hope of heaven—the hope of calm repose at last, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

Nor does this terrible severity of retribution fall upon guilty parents alone; it descends also upon their wicked, ruined children in tenfold vengeance. Such parents may be truly pious, and if so, they have a support which lightens the burden of their wo. But indulged children almost never become subjects of grace, and therefore they stand naked and unsheltered, to bear the pelting of the pitiless storm—to receive the stings and arrows of remorse and calamity to which they are exposed by their own criminality. For, let it be distinctly borne in mind, that while parental indulgence is a crying sin, and usually instrumental in the ruin of children, such children are by no means excusable, but are justly chargeable with the guilt of self-destruction. The parental delinquency does not diminish a jot the atrocity of juvenile wickedness. While the parent destroys his son by not controlling and restraining him, the son destroys himself by a wilful and determined course of wickedness and folly. The parent's guilt is that of the accessory before the fact, who might have prevented the commission of murder, but failed to do so: the guilt of the spoiled boy is that of the principal, who perpetrated the murderous deed with his own hand.

In exact accordance with these principles were the calamities which befell the family of the high-priest of Israel. Look at the disconsolate father, standing in mute despair amid the ruins of all his domestic hopes and enjoyments. Led astray by a false tenderness, he has permitted his sons to plunge into ruin, and to become the authors of severest sufferings—he is compelled to be an agonized witness of their guilty career, while they are bringing upon themselves swift destruction. His heart is torn with self-reproach, his family is ruined, he feels upon him the hand of divine displeasure, and the cup of his wo is filled by the annunciation, that exterminating judgments were impending, and that his sons would both fall under the stroke of avenging justice. What heart can conceive, what language describe the mental torture of that good old man? A torture which admitted of no relief, until the dreadful message came that his sons were slain, and the ark of God

taken—when his aged heart was broken at last—he sunk in death, and the days of his mourning were ended.

Turn your thoughts now to those guilty, ruined young men. Recollect what they might have been—what prospects once opened before them—what advantages they enjoyed, and what an affluence of temporal and spiritual blessings courted their acceptance; and now reflect what they are? miserable victims of pride and unbridled passions—the object of public abhorrence, the grief and reproach of their father, the wicked destroyers of their whole family, abandoned of God, and hopelessly consigned to utter destruction. How unutterably dreadful was their condition even in this world. But a heavier vengeance awaited them; they were smitten down in their youth by a violent death, and hurried unforgiven, unprepared, to the tremendous bar of an offended God!

In reviewing this mournful history, who of us can be unaffected by the impressive lessons it affords, and the appalling picture it presents, of the guilt and misery attendant upon parental indulgence and mismanagement? Is it possible to conceive a scene of more aggravated wretchedness, than the one we have been contemplating? And at the same time, who can fail to perceive that all this accumulated wo is the just and necessary consequence of the voluntary misconduct of those more immediately concerned?

REMARKS.

1. Applying the statements and conclusions of this discourse to the present time, and to the actual circumstances of the community; we cannot but be struck with the direful effects of parental indulgence within our own personal observation.

2. This subject presents most important and salutary counsel and warnings to those parents whose offspring are yet in the tender years of childhood.

3. This subject should be regarded with deep and solemn interest by the young—especially by the children of pious parents.

4. The history and example of Eli's sons furnish awful admonitions to all the self-confident and profligate, who have cast off the restraints of a pious education, and who now seem either walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful—really appearing neither to fear God nor regard man. I know there are such, who listen to admonitions from the pulpit with the same sneering contempt with which they regard parental entreaties. But let them take heed—God will take them in hand.

SERMON CLVI.

By STEPHEN CHAPIN, D. D.,
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PECULIAR RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUNG MEN.

1 John ii. 14.—*I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

From these words and the context, it is evident that the sacred writer expected more from young Christians than from any other class. He grounded this expectation upon the strength of their love, the stability of their principles, their attainments in divine knowledge, and the conquest they had already gained. They had love to move, light to guide, habits to facilitate, and past success to animate them, in their warfare against sin, and in their labors of love to promote the best good of mankind.

In every age, the church has reason to expect more from young men of piety and knowledge, than from any other class of professing Christians. This is evident,

I. From the fact, that religion, when embraced in early life, gives greater expansion of mind than when embraced at a later period. In the spring-time of life, there is a peculiar mellowness in the affections, and a special susceptibility of intellectual expansion. The momentous doctrines of the gospel, if then embraced, appear in their unclouded glory, and are felt in all their transforming and ennobling influence: but their effect is not so powerful, when they are first embraced in declining age. The mind then has long been controlled by worldly objects: much of its freshness and strength have been wasted in the pursuit of earthly glories. It has thus lost its early tenderness and pliancy, and has contracted a fixedness of character peculiarly unfavorable to rapid enlargement and powerful excitement under the action of new and ennobling motives.

II. Early religion gives superior strength to the active powers of the soul. This truth may be considered as a legitimate inference from the preceding argument: for the germ of benevolence is ever feeble or vigorous in proportion to the strength or weakness of that light, which

is essential to its production. Truth is as requisite to the growth of moral feeling, as food is to the support of animal strength. It is also true, that the young are more susceptible of excitement than are the aged. It is owing to this fact, that connections and friendships are much more easily formed in childhood and youth than in declining age. If, then, their affections are brought under the sway of heavenly motives, they will, in the course of life, acquire a sensibility and vigor far superior to what they would have acquired, had they first been brought under the same motives near the close of life.

III. Early religion tends to give superior permanency to moral affections and habits of benevolent action. If the great truths of religion were seen as vividly by the convert in old age, as they are in early conversions, they would not be kept so steadily in his view as they would be in the view of the youthful convert, because his habits of thought and of action, on subjects foreign from religion, have long been settled, and these associations will occur again and again, and abate the bright visions of his mind, and cool the ardor of his love. He who is converted in advanced years is hardly ever more than half a Christian during the short period of his active service. His passions having been often intensely excited by the prospect of wealth, or pleasure, or fame, and having been as often disappointed, naturally sink into a state of torpor. Indeed, in this way, they soon lose much of their excitability, and, therefore, no new combinations of truth and motive can easily rouse them to action. But, when religion is embraced in the dawn of being, it not only awakens the strongest emotions of love, but leads on to that practice, which soon settles into permanent habits of benevolent effort. In the objects of desire there is no room for disappointment. The young Christian is not exposed, like worldly men, to be disheartened by failures. Does he cry for more knowledge? it is soon bestowed. Does he pant for more holy ardor? his heart will be sure to burn with a greater intensity of love. Does he seek felicity in acts of devotion and kindness? he is sure to find his chief good in drawing nigh to God, and in deeds of charity. This strength of affection, and this success in pious effort, will lead to those habits of obedience which constitute at once the highest glory and blessedness of the human character.

IV. Youthful Christians are more readily enlisted in great undertakings, than those who are sinking under the infirmities of age. As truth is the object of the understanding, so good is the object of the will. This active power, therefore, ever moves the believer to the greatest efforts, when there is the prospect of producing the greatest amount of good. The man who thinks of entering the spiritual vineyard at the last period of life, knows that his time of action must be short. A conviction of this fact checks his zeal, and renders him less active than he would be, had he the prospect of a long period of usefulness. But, in relation to those who are regenerated in their youth,

all these abating circumstances are reversed. They have the fairest prospect of a long continued period of labor. They have ground to believe that they shall have time to achieve much good. They are, therefore, encouraged to form designs upon a large scale of usefulness, and to execute them with all the zeal and perseverance which usually attend efforts to accomplish great undertakings. The aged saint is disheartened, not only by the shortness of his remaining life, but by his consciousness, that all his abilities for service have greatly decayed. He knows that while his spirit is willing, his flesh is weak. But young men are animated, not only by the hope of long life, but by the fact that they possess their mental powers in such full vigor as to qualify them for the highest achievements.

Thus, from the influence which early piety has in expanding the intellectual faculties, in strengthening all the active powers of the soul, in giving permanency to habits of benevolent action; and from the peculiar and powerful motives for religious effort presented to young men of piety and knowledge, it is evident that the church has reason to expect more from them than from any other class of professing Christians.

1. Our subject suggests the reason why God, in the advancement of the church, has assigned to young men of piety the most important services. In all the most interesting transactions of the Jewish church, young men were called to fill conspicuous places, and were honored in gaining the most signal achievements. It was by young men that Abraham rescued his brother Lot, and conquered five confederated kings. When the Jews were to be delivered from Egyptian bondage, God shed down the influences of his Spirit in a remarkable degree upon the youth, and, on account of their superiority in moral courage and activity, he employed them as his principal agents in sustaining his cause in the wilderness, and in conducting the typical church into the promised land of rest. When the law was promulgated from the top of Sinai, young men were employed to offer burnt-offerings and sacrifice peace-offerings upon the altar of Jehovah. It was young men whom the Lord selected to sally forth from the gates of Samaria, to vanquish the countless hosts of Syrians who had long besieged that city. And when the gospel was to be spread among the Gentiles, God poured out his Spirit upon young men, and thus qualified them to preach in his name, and to spread Christianity throughout the Roman empire. God, in thus honoring this class, displayed his wisdom and benevolence. Though he be almighty, and can give success to any instruments, yet, in selecting them, he often proceeds as if the accomplishment of the end depended entirely upon their fitness. Men are more suitable than angels to become messengers of love to a fallen world. And, of all classes in the church, young men possess the highest qualifications to perform the severest and most perilous labors in accomplishing the designs of mercy. God, in giving young men this prominency, has furnished his people with a proper example in choosing agents to promote the cause of Zion.

If they wish for the highest success, they must call those to their aid who are best qualified to execute their purposes.

2. We see the reason why God most frequently pours out his Spirit upon youth. If a man, after having wasted his powers, and grown gray in the service of sin, be then converted, he must form but a feeble agent in the kingdom of Christ. Hence, God usually leaves the hoary sinner to die in his iniquity. It is true, there are exceptions to this fact. Some are plucked as brands out of the fire, just before their death, and have thus been made signal monuments of mercy. But it is generally upon the youth that the showers of grace descend. This is emphatically true in modern revivals. It is upon the rising generation that the influences of the Divine Spirit have been shed forth in rich abundance. It is also an interesting fact, that, of late years, there is an increase in the proportion of male professors among the youth. Recently, in one year, there were rising of four hundred hopeful conversions among the young men in our colleges. This circumstance should be regarded as a signal intimation of the Divine favor. When the vast moral field is so white, and the laborers so few, it is a most animating fact, that the Lord of the harvest is qualifying a great increase of laborers to send forth into his harvest.

3. Our subject suggests special motives to pray for the conversion of young men. We are bound to pray, in submission, for all men, and to rejoice in the conversion of the humblest and the least promising character. But still, those who are renewed in youth, we have seen, are superior in moral strength to those who experience this change in advanced years. And certainly the friends of Zion ought to be specially desirous for the calling of the most powerful agents into her service. The enterprising men of this world seek for those who are best fitted to advance their respective interests. The general knows that the well-trained youth makes a better soldier, and is likely to remain longer in the service, than one who enters the army at forty. The man who, from his boyhood, has been habituated to trade, makes a more accurate and successful merchant than he who commences the business after he has passed his meridian. It is much so in spiritual things. The most honored individuals of ancient times were distinguished for early piety. Moses and Joshua, Samuel and Jeremiah, Daniel and John were sanctified in childhood, and as they grew in years they waxed stronger and stronger in spiritual might. Hence the amount of good they performed, and the wonders they wrought. How powerful, then, the motive to pray for the conversion of those who thus promise the greatest good to the kingdom of Christ. Never before was the field to be cultivated so great as it now is, and never so inviting. Truly the harvest is plenteous, and the laborers are few. Let it then be our prayer, that God would pour out his Spirit upon our youth, and upon our seminaries of learning. There are, in this rising nation, more than fifty colleges and universities, besides a very large number of academies and high schools. These institutions embrace within their walls the flower of our country.

Many of these youth possess talents of a superior grade. And their intellectual and moral powers are daily unfolding, and strengthening. These are the individuals who are coming forward to fill the most important stations in society, and to become the arbiters of future generations. Who can feel indifferent as to the character which this choicest portion of our citizens shall sustain? But who can fashion their hearts aright, and inspire them with that holy affection, and expansive benevolence which shall embrace the whole human family? Human teachers may, indeed, enrich and embellish their minds with the treasures of learning. But it is the prerogative of God to bring them to repentance, and to fire them with a quenchless zeal for the honor of his name. He can give them such bright views of the worth of the soul, of the glory of Christ, and of the blessedness of heaven, as shall constrain them to make it their whole concern to persuade their fellow-men to turn from sinful ways, and to embrace the offers of eternal life. Ye, then, that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, until he pour out his Spirit upon our seats of learning, and upon the rising generation throughout Christian lands, that we may have a countless army of young soldiers of the cross, to go forth and be the honored instruments of converting the nations to God.

4. Our subject suggests the importance of attending to physical and moral education. The body, no less than the mind, is susceptible of being trained to vigorous habits. The apostle encouraged young men to abound in the work of the Lord, not simply on account of their moral strength, but also on account of their superior bodily powers. He wished for agents possessing the highest qualifications, both in the inward and outward man. And this, too, should be our wish. We need agents of firm health, and vigor of constitution, that they may endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and sustain that high mental action, which is so much demanded by the present efforts to evangelize the world.

But our subject affords equal encouragement to moral and religious instruction. Solomon says, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Here, let it be observed, the wise man does not encourage parents to fidelity in this kind of training, by promising to bestow wealth, or fame, or long life. But he stimulates them by the assurance, that, in consequence of their faithful labors for the spiritual good of their child, he should be established in religious habits. This is a favor infinitely transcending all that the world can bestow. For what can impart greater happiness, or higher moral worth, than to possess the unchanging principle of obedience. But little, as yet, has been done to give to the moral powers of youth the highest degree of elevation and strength. What a difference between the heart of Nero and that of Howard, between the desires of Alexander and those of St. Paul. And is there now no process, which, by the blessing of Heaven, might produce an army of such men as Howard and Paul? May not some favored individual soon

arise, who, by untried and felicitious combinations of divine truth and moral excellencies, shall make impressions upon the hearts of saints and sinners far greater than any that have yet been produced? Would not Paul or Apollos, were they now to return to earth, so unveil before youthful minds the doctrines of Christianity, as to kindle within them a higher and a purer flame of love than has been felt since their time? How much do we now need men of that soundness in body, and life in soul, which would enable them to wield, with a giant's grasp, the weapons of our holy warfare—men of that firmness and fire which labor will not subdue, failure dishearten, nor danger appal—of that unblenching and right onward spirit, which defies the stake, the sword, and the rack, when they would obstruct the path of duty. Such men were the apostles and primitive preachers of the gospel. Inured to toils and to sufferings, till they were converted and received their heavenly commission, they were prepared to take on the whole armor of God, and to enter the field of conflict, as untiring and valiant soldiers of Christ. These were the men who could move the moral world, and plant the standard of the cross upon the ruins of idolatry. And who will say that another race, trained like them, might not now soon obtain similar victories?

5. Our subject presents powerful motives to students to seek the favor and service of Christ. You prize nothing so highly as intellectual supremacy: and you would doubtless follow any counsel which you believed would put you in possession of this distinction. But what subject in the whole range of thought can give such an impulse to your mind, and such an elevation of all its powers as that of pure religion? No one doubts this who understands its nature. It consists in sublime conceptions of God—of the extent and influence of redemption, and of the effect of probation on the eternal destinies of man, and in a hearty observance of all the great duties of revelation. This religion has done more to exalt human character than all other subjects combined. It is the grand element of mental and moral growth, both in heaven and earth. Indeed, no man can be truly great, unless his mind is purified and enlarged by its sacred power. It gave elevation and grandeur of soul to prophets and apostles; and in modern days, it has placed high in the scale of being such men as Newton, and Milton, and Boyle, and Locke. It is the only redeeming power from heaven that is now going forth to emancipate one nation after another from the slavery of sin, and to introduce among them learning, and genius, and arts, and comforts, and the virtues of social life. In this manner it will continue its career, until every human tribe has felt its benign influence, and the earth is changed into a paradise of truth and holiness. This is the religion which I would urge upon your immediate regards. Do you wish to possess the richest source of lasting happiness? do you wish to have your names enrolled in the brightest record of renown? or to wear an unfading crown? let me assure you that this happiness and these honors can be obtained

only in the possession of vital piety, and in the consecration of all your powers to the glory of God and the good of men. Those who seek their chief good in no higher objects than the world can present, must be for ever disappointed. For it is the purpose of Heaven, that those who neglect his glory "shall be lightly esteemed," and their names held in "everlasting contempt." While the Alexanders, the Cæsars, and the Bonapartes shall be searching in vain for their laurels, Mary and Lazarus, and the humblest follower of the Lamb, shall be wearing their heavenly crowns of unfading lustre. Come, then, guilty and unworthy as you are, and give yourselves to the Lord Jesus, and he will make you kings and priests unto God. He will make you sharers with himself in the work of renovating the world, and your efforts in this short life to advance his kingdom shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

6. Our subject addresses itself with deep and solemn interest, at the present day, to pious young men. The church has recently been divinely moved to undertake the great work of spreading the gospel among all nations. The field which, under God, she intends to cultivate and make fruitful, is no less than the whole world. In executing this sublime enterprise, the church will need gold and silver, and the physical efforts of vast numbers. But the chief agents in effecting this change are the young disciples of the cross—those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and enriched by the graces of the Spirit. As it is the action of matter upon matter, which keeps up a healthful motion in the material world; so it is the action of mind upon mind, which affects all the important changes in the spiritual world. You have seen the distinguished rank which God has heretofore assigned to those of your age in extending the blessings of his kingdom. And as the same reasons exist for such services now, God is presenting the strongest motives to induce you to unite in the same glorious effort.

The inspired John wished to enlist the aid of young men in the church "because they were strong." For the same reason we now invite you to come up with greater boldness to the help of the Lord. "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you." Yes, young men, ransomed by blood of Jesus, enjoying the light of Heaven, and filled with the love of Christ, are the strongest agents in our moral world. The holy truths they dispense, the light they shed, the sword they wield, and the zeal and compassion they display, are the strongest weapons in the armor of God. These weapons have a direct tendency to demolish the strongholds of Satan. It is true, that such is the inveteracy of sin, that even these weapons will not subdue it, unless attended by the aid of the Holy Ghost. But on this account you have no more right to say that they are impotent, that they have no tendency to overcome the heart, than you would have to say, that battering engines have no force, merely because they do not beat down a strong fortress. No, my young friends, "ye are strong," and your

strength, when put forth in humble dependence, will be triumphant. Come forward, then, without wavering, draw the spiritual sword, throw away its scabbard, and disdain all thoughts of respite in your warfare till released by death, and taken up to heaven to be crowned as conquerors. The great enterprise which the religious world has just commenced must be conducted chiefly by your instrumentality. Such is its nature and magnitude that it must be accomplished by those who possess a high degree of physical and religious power. Who are to cross the mighty deep, to aid in the translation and printing of the Scriptures and tracts, to be spread through the Eastern empire of darkness? Who are to traverse the immense valley of the Mississippi, to set up Sunday Schools, and to plant churches, to bless that rising world which is soon to sway the destinies of our nation? Who are to accompany the poor Indians, through forests and over lakes, to their western wilds, to partake with them in all their privations and hardships, for the privilege of proclaiming to them a Savior's love? Who are to sustain the banners of the cross which are now planted around the globe, and keep alive those gospel fires, which are now scattered over pagan lands? Who will endure the burning heat of the line, or the eternal frosts of the poles? Who, I say, are to perform these services, and to fill these posts? Look at facts. Who have already gone forth as the heralds of peace among gentile nations? Are they not young men, who cannot but declare what they have seen and heard? O, then, listen to the gospel trumpet, which is now sounding for new volunteers in the army of the living God. Who is on the Lord's side? Who will now come forward, and say, "here am I, send me?"

They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

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SERMON CLVII.

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TIME MEASURED BY ETERNITY.

James iv. 14—*For what is your life?*

This question has met the eye of thousands without making the slightest impression upon their minds; and I fear it is commonly dismissed with as little thought, as if it related to the most trifling subject. But when we pause for a moment to consider its import—when we glance at its momentous bearings, and listen to its deep toned emphasis, it assumes an importance compared with which many of those great questions that agitate nations are of less weight than the dust of the balance. *For what is your life?* The first and most obvious answer is that which the apostle himself gives, "It is even a vapor which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." It is a momentary scene of hope and disappointment, of joys and sorrows, of entrances and exits. But as we dwell upon the question, there is another thought of far deeper interest. It is, that our life is the threshold of eternity—the infancy of immortality; that here our characters are to be formed for the innumerable ages of future being—that our everlasting happiness or misery is suspended upon our improvement of this inch or two of time. What an amazing value do these considerations give to the breath that is in our nostrils!

I am aware, that the text does not directly contemplate all that is suggested in these remarks. It *primarily* challenges our serious

meditations upon the shortness and uncertainty of life; but as this life is our only probation, I think myself warranted in calling your attention also to this more extended application of the question. I shall accordingly,

I. Consider it in reference to this momentary and chequered state of being; and

II. As affording the only opportunity to prepare for a happy eternity.

I. Let us consider the text in reference to the brevity and uncertainty of life. *What is your life?* Can you grasp the vapor? Will it stay to be analyzed? or does it not rather mock all your efforts, and vanish when you think you hold it most securely? You breathe the vital air, but surely this is not your life. You live because you eat and drink and sleep; and you walk and act and speak, because you live; but who can describe that pervading invisible something to which we give the name of life, and which keeps the crimson tide in perennial motion?

What, in reference to its continuance, is your life? A vapor, a tale that is told, a dream, a fading leaf, a dissolving cloud, a withering flower. We perceive it, or rather we see what indicates its presence, when the sun goes down, and in the night it passes suddenly away. We go into the chamber—we look where it was, but it is gone. There is the body, just as it used to be, with all its members and organs, and displaying as much as ever the handy-work of the Creator. But if we speak to it, there is no hearing and no answer. If we handle it, it is cold as a clod. If we reason, or expostulate—if we mourn, or rejoice, it regards us not. It does not move a limb, nor drop a tear, nor put on a smile. The eye may be open, but it sees nothing. The heart is there, but as still and dead as a stone. In short all the mysterious functions of life have ceased. The late inhabitant is far away. Only the mouldering frame is left, and the dust must return to the dust as it was. Verily, my hearers, your life is a vapor. It appears like the mist upon the mountain's side, and while we behold, it suddenly vanishes away.

And what is your life, contemplated with reference to the sweetest and most lasting earthly enjoyments? How long will they continue? Perhaps an hour, or a day, and possibly a little longer. But what is a day, or a year, or even the space between infancy and gray decrepitude? What is the scriptural biography of one who lived twelve

or fifteen of our ages? Why, that he was born, and that he died. Who is there that does not look back upon all his past enjoyments, as upon a dream when one awaketh? Ah, ye votaries of pleasure, when you come to lie down upon the bed of death, and take an inventory of all that you now call happiness, what will it amount to? Lay it carefully under your pillow; will it ease your throbbing and half distracted brain? Press it to your heart; will it bring back the warm and genial current of life? Read over the items one by one. So much sensual pleasure—so much money—so many houses and lands—so much honor. Then look at the footing. Ah! what is the available sum, when all these enjoyments are over! Think of it. Bring it still nearer to your waning eyes, and grasp it again if you can, when your friends shudder to remain with you in your chamber, and death's pale attendants are all busily at work in taking down your shattered tabernacle. What, in that awful moment, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? What are all the bygone delights of the fancy, of the taste, of the imagination, or the intellect? They are as if they had never been, or when recollected they only serve to make the approach of the king of terrors more unwelcome.

And what, on the other hand, is your life, when estimated in full view of all its thousand ills? They may cause the flesh to quake and the heart to bleed for a moment; but they will soon be over; perhaps in one short hour; certainly within a period so short, that it will appear as nothing in the long retrospect of future being. "This I say, brethren, the time is short." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And this to the righteous is the morning of a day which will never end. But whether you are righteous or wicked, when you come to look back from beyond the gates of death upon whatever you may have suffered in this life, your past sorrows, like your past joys, will flit away as the shadows of a momentary dream, and you will wonder how you could ever have been so disquieted by them.

Thus far my remarks have been general, but you will permit me to come a little nearer by addressing different classes of my audience. And what, my gray-headed and tottering friends, is *your* life? How short the period since you were in the cradle and dandled in the lap of parental affection! Once you thought, no doubt, that seventy years must be long enough for any one to live; but tell me, what is your

present estimate? Ah! methinks I hear you falter, Few and evil have been our days! So true it is, that

"Time advancing hides his wings,
And seems to creep on young."

What then is the past with you, but a restless night spent between waking and sleeping? How much of life is now left besides wrinkles and infirmities;—days without pleasure and nights without repose? And how long can you expect to live? O, how many warnings have you of approaching dissolution: Loss of sight, loss of hearing, loss of memory, loss of strength; your skin cleaving more and more to your bones; limbs trembling; joints stiffening; hair whitening; grinders ceasing; in short, all the harbingers of death gathering about you, and officiously tendering their services to prepare your last bed, your coffin, your shroud, and your abode in dust, where worms shall crawl over you!

And ye men of business and of might, in the high meridian of your course, What is your life? Were we to make up an estimate from your daily conversation, from the eagerness of your worldly pursuits, from your extensive plans, and far-reaching expectations, we must suppose you exempted from the common lot of mortality. But no estimate can be more delusive. Strip your life then of these fictitious and imposing circumstances, and what is it but a vapor? What obstacle does your fine constitution oppose to the ravages of disease?—to the stroke of death? How many firmer have fallen in a few days, or hours? You are rejoicing, perhaps, in a degree of health which knows but few and trifling interruptions; and so were thousands one week ago, who are now still and powerless, with the nations under ground. You have, it may be, large and dependant families, and so had many of them. But the clinging and sobbing of their little ones could not save them. How many, even of your own acquaintance, have been called for, when all were ready to say they could not be spared! You wish to live to educate your children and see them advantageously settled in the world: but, What is your life? What longer or better lease have you than your neighbor had, whose wife is now a widow and his children orphans?

But you have talents, and a name, perhaps: you have begun to rise, and your influence is increasing: the temple of fame shines high and afar in your bright horizon; and there is many a glittering eminence between you and the elevation to which you ultimately aspire. But, pause for a moment and think, What is your life? Where now are

some, whose prospects were brighter, yesterday, than any that can rise to your view? and where, to-morrow, will the admirers of other look for them but in the grave? Be entreated then, I beseech you, to pause, and answer the apostle's question, "*What is your life?*"

But you are laying up property: by industry and frugality you hope in a few years to become rich. But where are these few years, on which you count with so much assurance? Remember, death is no respecter of wealth, in possession or in prospect. He can unclench the firmest grasp. Nothing, it would seem, delights him more than tearing away the worldling from his home, and blasting the fairest prospects which spread themselves out in his golden slumbers.

But I turn to another class of my hearers. And what, my young friends, is your life? It appears to most of you, I doubt not, like a great estate, or something far better than that, in almost certain reversion. Your fancy collects the brightest colors, and your imagination paints the landscape in the most charming hues. It spreads over it the life, and beauty, and fragrance of spring. It is a delightful elevation, at which you aim, which rejoices in the bright visitation of your morning without clouds, and to your ardent gaze every thing brightens still as you advance. Former disappointments avail nothing. The ambush of disease you do not suspect; and even death stalks about unheeded, though in plain view, and threatening at almost every turn to cross your path.

You live in the elysian future. Whoever may fall short of the goal, you expect soon to be there, and to be greeted by a long train of obsequious delights. Cruel officiousness! you may be ready to say, which would darken such a prospect. But I must, though it were at the hazard of your displeasure, deal truly and faithfully with you, For what is your life? How much is it worth to the halest and most sanguine youth of this assembly? What is the tenure by which you hold the precious boon? Who has so lately come down from heaven to contradict the Bible, no less than the experience of every day, and to declare that the young shall not die?

If you have any such lease of life, produce it, and let me look at the signature. Ah, my young friends, it is at best but a forgery, or a blank. What though you never seriously think of dying; can this stupid presumption save you, when the relentless messenger shall come up into your windows? You are young, but how many millions have died younger! Consult the first bill of mortality that comes in your way, and ask yourself, What is my life? A mere scratch may

destroy it—an insect may undermine the frail tabernacle—a very moth may sever some thread on which all depends. It is only to shut out a little air, or to let in a floating atom to rankle for a few moments in your vitals, and all will be over. Your bloom, health, and hopes perish together.

What then, my young friends, is your life? O, be persuaded, whenever you enter the place of graves, to make out the estimate there. Consult the records of the marble planted fields; they will not deceive you. Go from stone to stone, and as you read, say, What is my life?

In every view, thus far taken, of the text, we are brought to the same solemn conclusion, that all flesh is grass; that man at his best estate is altogether vanity. But,

II. There is another view of the subject, which makes life of unspeakable value. I mean when we consider it as preparatory to an endless existence beyond the grave. In this light, a vapor as it is, our present life is every thing. If all the mountains in the world were gold and silver, they would not be weighed against it. Their value would be nothing in the comparison. Think, O think, if you can, what are the interests which are suspended by the most brittle thread! God has sent us to stay a few days here, and for what? To prepare for death. For death, not on account of its intrinsic importance, but as the gate of eternity. Here then we are put on trial, and here the momentous question is to be decided, whether we shall go to heaven or hell—whether we shall dwell with angels or devils—whether we shall rise and shine, and shout in glory, or sink and wail in the blackness of darkness for ever.

Yes, my hearers, the grand question is to be settled here, and settled soon, and settled finally. In this point of view, the length of one person's life, compared with that of another, makes not the least difference. Be it longer or shorter, it is *all*. It may be ten, or fifteen, or twenty years—it may be a little more, or it may be less. But there will be no other state of trial. The young man or young woman who lives in sin but twenty years, and then dies impenitent, plunges as surely into the lake of fire and brimstone, as the hoary-headed sinner of fourscore.

There is, therefore, no equal portion of our existence, no conceivable duration in eternity, which can for one moment be compared with the present life in point of importance. There, a thousand ages of joy or wo will decide nothing as to the future. Here, one day may decide every thing. A million of years, then, after death, may be of

less moment to the man who is now on his death-bed, than the few moments which he still has to live. Upon that short period, a whole eternity may be suspended.

Does this point need illustration? Suppose, then, that a kingdom were offered to a man, and that he must comply with the conditions in an hour, or lose it forever; how much more would depend upon that hour than upon all the rest of his life!

Suppose that one of you had been condemned to suffer perpetual imprisonment, in chains and in a dungeon, and an hour was granted you to sue for pardon, and upon the most humble confession to obtain your liberty—how much more valuable would that hour be than fifty subsequent years of night, and solitude, and chains!

But how inadequate, how poor is every possible illustration, to set forth the amazing value of a life which in every other point of view is nothing!

"Great God! on what a brittle thread
Hang everlasting things!"

The subject suggests many solemn inferences and remarks; among which are these:

1. If human life is so short and so uncertain,—if it is but a momentary vapor,—let all who hear me, make out their estimates, and lay their plans, and conduct all their concerns accordingly. You know you must die; O that you would lay it to heart. You know that the present breath is all that you are sure of. As for the past, what is it? I appeal to you, whether it appears most like a reality or a dream. As for the present, you see, continually, the dying and the dead. But O, tell me, are you not living as if life never closed? You are, unless you are actually striving to enter in at the strait gate—unless you are working out your salvation with fear and trembling.

How little do many of you think, in the hurry of business, in the pursuits of literature, of gain, and of pleasure, in the strength of manhood, in the heedlessness of youth—how little do you think of the hour of death, of the darkness, and the worm,—the dust and oblivion to which you are hastening! O, my dying fellow sinners, pause, I beseech you, pause and think, What is your life? Strive to live every day and hour under the impression that it is even a vapor. Let all your worldly schemes be based upon this great truth—that you know not what shall be on the morrow.

2. Is life, when contemplated in connection with eternity, of such amazing importance?—is it a state of trial? and is all beyond, a recompense of rewards?—are the eternal interests of your souls de-

pending on the few sands that remain?—is heaven to be won or lost, on this foot or two of earth, and in this inch or two of time?—is a crown of glory to be soon gained or lost forever, by each individual before me?—and are you rational beings? Do you know all this? Has God told you that "Now is the accepted time?" Does he expostulate with you, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart?" Does he admonish you, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow?" —and yet can you waste in unprofitable care or speculation that precious time which to each sinner in a state of probation is worth more than millions of worlds? Be astonished, O heavens, at this! Thousands there are, who will not be persuaded to seek the salvation of their souls,—to secure the pearl of great price, though God from above warns them—though hell from beneath is moved for them—though justice frowns from her awful seat, and mercy pours out her heart over them like water!

Is not this the case with some of you? Are you not wasting life, and wearying divine forbearance, and slighting heaven, and braving the terrors of damnation? And what will you do when the scene closes? Will you not then curse your present infatuation? Will you not cry out, A world for an hour! *A world for an hour!* But where will be your world to offer? And if you had a million, what would the offer avail?

Is there, fellow sinner, one thing between you and the grave, which you can cling to, with any confidence that your hold may not in a moment be broken? And then, O eternity! eternity! Have you thought of eternity? And in this view have you ever attempted to estimate a day, an hour of probation? Have you made your peace with God? Have you been convinced of your perishing condition as a sinner? Have you fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel? Is your soul washed in a Savior's blood? Is it meet for the society of angels?—of the just made perfect? What if death should enter your room this night, and you wake up to-morrow in another world? For what world, I ask, would you be fitted?

O, think, What is your life? When you lay your plans, and hopes rise before you in endless prospect, think, What is your life? When God calls, and the tempter says, to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant—think, What is your life? Ah! it is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Then, though you call the world your own—or though you understand all knowledge—without the favor of Immanuel, you are undone for ever!

SERMON CLVIII.

By Rev. WILLIAM NEVINS,

BALTIMORE.

SOLEMN VIEWS OF PROBATION.

James iv. 14—"*What is your life?*"

This weighty question which the apostle asks with a particular allusion, I propose to ask and answer with a more general reference. The subject, always appropriate, is peculiarly so at this season. It is not necessary, I presume, to expatiate on the manifold importance of a correct estimate and a careful consideration of human life. The soul is influenced to its determinations and actions by motives presented to it. Man operates on man by these; and they are among the most important means of the moral government of God. Now, the consideration of human life in its various accidents, relations and bearings, supplies some of the most powerful and prevailing of motives. How frequently is this class of motives introduced and urged in the Bible. "And that knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of sleep. Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end. Go to, now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." *What is your life?*

On this subject I purpose to submit a series of observations, which, I hope, will prove neither uninteresting nor uninstructive. If we implore the blessing of God to accompany them, I am sure they will not. I adopt this question, not for any object of curiosity, nor with a view to attempt a philosophical definition of life. Philosophy has in vain endeavored to trace out and detect the vital principle. It has eluded every research. It defies analysis. We know *that* it is, for we see

its movements around us, and we feel its workings within us. But *what* and *where* it is, we know not. We distinguish life into various kinds—vegetable, animal, intellectual, spiritual; but in doing so, we give no explanation of what life is. We throw no light on the darkness which envelops it. It is latent still. The life of the body, we know, is the effect of the inspiration of the Almighty; and not the result of any exquisite material organization. He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." To the soul itself life is essential. It cannot be conceived to exist without it.

But waving these speculations as rather curious than useful, we ask, What life is—the word being understood in its ordinary acceptation, as denoting that part of man's conscious existence which precedes the dissolution of the body, the space antecedent to that strange separation, in consequence of which the dust returns to the earth, and the spirit to God who gave it? Life, as the antecedent of immortality, what is it? And

1. In point of *duration*. The ordinary term of human life was once nearly 1000 years. It is reduced to less than one-tenth of its former measure. It is usually reckoned at 70 years. Some go a little beyond that. The greater part come far short of it. Few of those whom I now address will ever reach it. How short life is! Verily it is a vapor, a span, a hand's breadth. Even when it was a thousand years, it was in the divine estimation *ephemeral;* for a thousand years are with the Lord as one day—and that a day past—yesterday. Yes, as a watch, i. e. the space of three hours—and not in the day time, but in the night, when men sleep and time steals away swiftly and unperceived. So much for the *absolute term* of human life.

2. The *effective portion* or available amount of life, is much less than its actual duration. It takes some of its first years for the mind to expand itself, and the various powers to get ready for action. Infancy and chidhood extend far into life and sometimes constitute the whole of it. And after this period, it requires nearly one half of a person's time, each day, to refresh and repair the powers of body and soul for action during the other half. Sleep, that emblem and image of death, so like death, says one, that it ought not to be trusted without prayer, occupies about one-third of man's earthly existence. Then, the mere mechanical operations of life, and those actions which are necessary to keep the vital machinery in repair, occupy other large portions of time: and sometimes, as in sickness, it lies idle, or works to no good purpose. When all the necessary deductions are made from the sum of human life, how little comparatively is left for the great moral purposes of our being! And then consider, how much of the remainder

is not devoted to these purposes! How much, that nature requires not for any of her uses, we waste, we squander! How prodigal of life we are! What spendthrifts of time! How poor, yea, how in debt we are, yet how lavish! With nothing beforehand of life, what free livers we are! How many hours we spend, though we have not one to spare, in unsuitable amusements, in unrefreshing recreation, in idle fancies, in unprofitable speculation, in useless or injurious reading, in vain and perhaps uncharitable conversation, in impertinent, if not ungenerous interference in the concerns of others, in political discussions and strifes to no profit, and I know not in how many other ways! All time so employed is *lost*, and I wish that all was said when that is said. It is far worse than lost. How much of life is spent—how much of the life of every impenitent sinner has been spent, in doing what must be undone, in making work for repentance, in running in debt to God! Has not the whole of his life been so spent? This is truly the worst business in which one can be engaged. It makes the greatest waste of time. For every minute thus employed, two are consumed. One is spent in doing the thing, and another is necessary to undo it, and for one of them an uncertain future is drawn upon. Are any of you so employed?—employed in doing what you must undo—in habitual sinning—pursuing a course of life that will require to be wept over and repented of?—I beseech you, change your occupation this day. Let the time already spent in this injurious and infatuated manner, suffice you. Begin now to *do* the work of repentance. You have accumulated enough of it. You have sinned long enough. To-day, just at this point, stop and turn. Repent, and come to Christ, and commence a new life.

There is a word in our language, whose etymology is a reproach to our nature. It is *pastime*, i. e. an invention to get rid of time, because it hangs so heavily, or to speed its progress, because it moves so tardily. Oh, could you give a little of your superfluous time to certain inhabitants of eternity, what thanks would they not render you! What you waste and would wear away is what they want, and would at any price redeem, if it were redeemable. But its redemption is even more precious than that of the soul. It has ceased for ever. There is no salvation for lost time. Some speak of *killing time*, as if it were an exploit to boast of. And they have their various ways of doing this murder. And they consider and discuss, how soonest and most effectually they may dispatch it. They should take care that in making their passes at time they do not thrust through and kill the soul.

And now, if little is left us, how much less, it appears, we leave ourselves for the high and mighty purposes of our existence here;

for repentance and reformation; for making progress in holiness, and in preparation for the coming judgment; for glorifying our God, for requiting our Savior, and doing good to men! How short this preface to eternity, and how we shorten it! What expedition the court of heaven makes in bringing on its trials, and how we, as if not satisfied, hasten them! How momentary is probation in comparison with retribution! A whole eternity is to be employed in reaping and consuming in pleasure or pain the growth of a few seeds hastily scattered here! But this brings us to another consideration—

3. The *relative proportion* of human life—its *ratio* to eternity. This is incalculable. It is not a drop to the aggregate drops of the waters, wide and deep, of ocean, with all its seas and rivers. It is less than that. It is not one grain of sand to the sum total of the dusty particles that make up this huge and solid earth. It is less. It is finite to infinite—a point that has but position, to a line that hath beginning, but no end, being produced eternally. How long, O, how long, is eternity! how long to suffer—to be in despair! Does not the aged person seem to himself to have lived a great while? or rather does he not seem to have lived a great while, to the youth who is looking forward? Yet the retrospect of the one and the prospect of the other extends scarcely beyond seventy years! How long it seems since our world began? Yet it is not 6000 years. Look forward 6000 years. How long it will be ere those years have completed their circuit! Pass from thousands to millions, and from millions on through all the terms of numeration. Yet those years are not eternity. They are no part of it. Oh, eternity! It has no end, for it has no progress. It is duration not in motion, but at rest. How long, even to enjoy; but to suffer..... with pain to protract it—pain that clogs the wheels of time, and makes hours seem days! What shall I say? There *is* an eternity of pain. My Bible tells me so, and tells me that we have all exposed ourselves to it; but Jesus died to save us from it. Hast thou fled to him for refuge from this great danger? If thou hast not, fly, quick and uncumbered as thought, to him, and be no longer exposed to an eternity of pain!

4. The *moral influence and bearing* of the present life, is the next topic. It is probationary, and the whole of probation. All that follows belongs to retribution. It is the *causal* period, and the only period of causation. Every thing beyond it is effect. It is the little pivot of existence, on which turns the immense and interminable whole. It is preparatory. Here we sow, and only here. Hereafter we reap, and we do nothing but reap. The foundation of judgment is laid altogether here. The present is the only part of duration that is to be

specifically accounted for. In the final day of decision, we are informed, we shall receive in retribution according to the deeds *done in the body*. Though we shall be accountable beings as long as we exist, yet it is this short prefatory portion of our accountable existence that is to determine the character of all the rest. The actions of this little limited life are empowered to decide for eternity. This is a consideration of unparalleled power and weight. Let it be contemplated and felt. *We are acting for eternity!* Ages of retribution answer to this hour of probation. How circumspectly, then, ought we to live! If such be the consequences of life, how frugal ought we to be of its moments! How much more necessary now, than ever they will be hereafter, are anxiety, watchfulness, industry, and self-denial! A little care and effort now, and all will be safe forever. A little providence and pains taking, and you will have made your fortune for immortality. Oh, will you not strive to enter in at the strait gate? Will you not labor now for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life? "and watch a moment to secure an everlasting rest?"

5. The *uncertainty* of human life is a part of the general subject; on which it is only necessary to say, that there is no revealed ground of confidence that any part of the future will become present to us, while we are in the body. Death often comes entirely unexpected, and is sometimes literally instantaneous. There are cases in which the victim of sudden death is in health even to his final moment. It is speaking within bounds to say, that "we know not what a *day* may bring forth." What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.

6. The *dependency* of life is a topic that deserves attention. It is not independent—self-sustained. Proximately it is dependent on the union of body and soul. But on what does that union depend? Not on accident. That is a word which stands for no reality. Not on any independent and uncontrollable laws of nature. The laws of nature are the ordinances of Heaven, and do but perform the will of a Supreme Intelligence. Life is dependent on the determinations of an intelligent being. There is a Sovereign of life, and he is absolute. It is God, in whose hand our breath is. "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return ye children of men." The reasons of his determinations with respect to life are unsearchably hidden. His thoughts and ways in reference to this matter are not as ours, but high above them. What He does, we know not now. On what principles he protracts life in some cases, and cuts it short in others, we cannot say. Their wisdom transcends our comprehension. He decides with all eternity spread out before him. We see not half way to the grave.

It is no wonder we decide differently. He plucks life, full often in the bud. Yea, its tenderest shoots disappear before him. They seem to have withered; but we hope they are transplanted to a kindlier soil—a more genial clime. In the death of infants, we seem to see Jesus reaching out his hands from heaven, and saying "Suffer the little children to come unto me"—or rather heaven itself, acting as a mighty magnet to bring those little unresisting spirits to the joy of their Lord. He cuts short the life of usefulness; he takes away the prop of the family; he prostrates pillars of the church; he removes ornaments of the state. What vacancies he creates, what bereavements he causes, what disappointments he occasions, what heart-bleedings and heart-breakings! How often he strikes just where we think he should not, and the universe affords no shield against the force of his blow. And yet, how strange, he often spares the wretch who bares his bosom to the stroke, and implores that he may die. He lets the life that had become a weight and a weariness run on; spins out old age, and protracts pain, decrepitude, poverty and misfortune beyond their wishes; while as often he disregards the most importunate petitions for life; and even his own children present their united prayers in the name of the great Advocate in vain!

7. The *inequality* of human life requires a word. In order that life may be uncertain, it is necessary that it should be of unequal length; and that it should be entirely uncertain, so as to baffle all calculation and defy conjecture, seems to be a first principle with God. Here is a reason for its inequality. But why this particular man should have so much more space allotted him for the pursuits and enjoyments of the world than that man,—above all, why the one should be allowed a period of probation so much more protracted than the other's,—why so much more time should be granted in the one case for hearing the gospel and deciding on the offer of salvation, is something we cannot explain—our knowledge extends only to the *fact*. But,

8. Life,—short, interrupted, uncertain, and unequal as it is,—is *long enough*. That life is long enough, which answers life's great end. Now this life does that, or if it do not, a longer life would not. If a man is determined to go on in sin, (and a man soon makes up his mind one way or the other,) life is long enough. The sooner it is over the better, if he has come to that determination. Why should he live only to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? If on the other hand he inclines to stop sinning, life is long enough for repentance, and for making a successful application to the Savior. The penitent thief found the way to Jesus short, and the welcome ready

The gospel makes a simple and intelligible proposal to men, which it requires no long time to consider and decide upon. A longer life would only the more dispose men to procrastination, to which they are already but too much inclined. Mankind are better by reason of the shortness of the term they live, and probably more are saved than would be, if the average of life was longer. It was when men lived a thousand years, that "the earth was filled with violence," and became so corrupt that a deluge was necessary to cleanse it. Never was repentance so rare as in the world before the flood. Never were the righteous so small a minority. Never so few were saved from any generation. We ourselves are proofs that life is long enough. It has afforded us an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the gospel, the way to be saved, our duty. Now, if we have complied with the plain requisitions of the gospel, we have lived long enough. To die to-day would be gain to us. If any have not complied, will they say that it has been for want of time?—With every disposition to repent and believe the gospel, will they say that they have lacked the space and opportunity? Has it not rather been for the want of *heart* to repent, that they have not repented? But will the lapse of time supply that defect?

9. Finally, if life be such as it has been represented, especially in regard to its uncertainty, it follows clearly and conclusively, that *the most important business of life, if it can be ascertained, should be attended to first.* Our life is such a vanishing vapor, such a fleeting shadow, and we are so frail, that we are in danger of dying and leaving some things undone. Now all things are not of equal importance. We had better leave some things unaccomplished than others. What is that which we had better by all means not leave undone? Find out what it is, and *do that first*, whatever it be. Is it not reasonable that you should do so? If the more important thing be not repentance, the seeking of the influences of the Holy Spirit, the surrender of the heart to Christ, the making of the soul's peace with God on the terms of the gospel, then by all means do not begin with this work, but put it off until you have done that other thing, which is more important than repentance and reconciliation to God, and by and by repent and make your peace with Him. But if, in your search, you find nothing more important than repentance and the application of the heart to religion, nothing *so* important, nothing that dying you would more regret having left undone, nothing that you can leave undone with so much injury, then begin with this—repent *first*, mind religion *now*. Do you not see that you *ought?* and *will* you not? Come, resolve to-

day, to do *first* that which is most important. Begin with this resolution. *Dare* to make it. Then, having made it, lay your hand upon your heart, and lift up your eye to heaven, and tell me if the most important thing be not, that you come to God through Jesus Christ, and devote yourself entirely and forever to his service. And is not the interval, in point of importance, between this and every thing else immeasurable? What remains then but to act conformably to your own decision? May God, for Christ's sake, by his Holy Spirit, incline you so to decide and do.

Beloved youth, suffer the word of exhortation. It is morning with you, bright and cheerful morning—and may it be noon, clear and cloudless; and afternoon serene and unportending; and may your sun go down in glory; and the twilight of your evening melt into the twilight of the morning of an eternal day. I wish you this, but you know this wish may never be realized. The morning may be all the day for you. What then will you now do? Will you decide in favor of that which has been recommended? You are to stand, remember, before the judgment seat of him who said, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Will you obey?

And you who are at the *noon* of life, the middle-aged, do you never wish, when wearied with the toils of business, and borne down by the weight of incumbent care, that you had attended to religion in the morning? Tell your children this. But as you did not attend to it then, will you now presume to put it off till evening? What infatuation! Because you have put it off so long, (already *too* long, as you confess,) will you put it off longer? Because you have done wrong once, will you do so again?—Ah, there may be no evening to your day; or if an evening, it may be gloomy and unpropitious. What if, at the *third* hour, when Christ said "Go ye into the vineyard," you went not, he comes out and calls also at the *sixth* hour? Will you now obey?

But there are those with whom it is already *afternoon*, evening, almost night. A word I have for you also. There is a little working time left—work then in haste—for the soul—for eternity! The evening is a part of the day, though it be the *last* part of it. And if you have stood idle all the day hitherto, O, be industrious for God and heaven now. *You* surely have no time to lose. For, behold the Judge standeth at the door. And

> "This is the summons that he brings,
> *Awake—for on this transient hour,*
> *Thy long eternity depends.*"

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SERMON CLIX.

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SOLEMN REBUKE TO THE UNGRATEFUL AND BACKSLIDING.

Luke xvii. 17—*Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?*

In the original, were not "*the ten* cleansed," the word has the particle before it, referring to those recently healed: and in the Syriac version, the next verse is read interrogatively—*Are there none found returning to give glory to God, but this stranger?* The incidents in this narrative are interesting. It is matter of gratitude that there were those who followed the footsteps of our Savior to relate both what they saw and what they heard. On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus passed through the confines of Samaria and Gallilee. As he approached one of their villages, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off. The leprosy was a loathsome disease, an emblem of sin, which may be called the leprosy of the soul. The lepers, by the Jewish law, which was strictly enforced, were excluded from cities and the society of men, though they might consort together; which sufficiently accounts for the number mentioned here. A community of suffering created a community of interest. The fame of Jesus had spread so wide that even these lepers, secluded from the world, had heard of him. In the hope of obtaining relief from the dreadful malady that afflicted them, they lifted up their voices and said, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* Distress made them earnest; a prospect of help gave them energy; and a common affliction united their hearts in the request. The Savior would teach them that salvation is of *faith;*—without pronouncing a cure, he directed them to go and show themselves to the priests, and "as they went they were cleansed." By going they evinced their confidence in his power. In the 19th verse, he says to the one that returned, "*Thy faith hath made thee whole.*" To make them feel their responsibility and to illustrate the methods of grace, he directed them, before the cure was effected, to go to the priests. He would al-

ways have us feel we are free agents; and yet dependent upon him for salvation. It appears that one of them, after they were healed, was so overcome with a sense of Divine goodness, that he at once returned to express his gratitude. *He turned back and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.* His voice was now as loud in praise, as before in prayer. But it is melancholy to think that this humble Christian is found alone—the rest had not returned to make grateful acknowledgments to their Divine benefactor. Jesus turning to him said, *Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?*

These affecting incidents suggest a series of remarks, suited to the occasion and the times, and especially suited to those who have united themselves to the church by profession.

I. *The work of God upon the heart imposes a high obligation to live to his glory.* This is obviously implied by our Savior's pointed inquiry, "Are there none returned to give glory to God save this stranger?" It seems to denote surprise, as though nothing could be more reasonable than such an expression on the part of those who had been cleansed. The bestowment of kindness always carries with it an obligation to make a return; the obligation is great in proportion as the bounty is large, gratuitous, purely benevolent. Where it is undeserved, and bestowed from pure motives, every ingenuous heart will respond to the claim of gratitude. If we simply consulted nature, we should be taught this truth. Hence nothing is considered among all nations so vile as ingratitude. Some of the heathen poets have described it in terms that should crimson a Christian's cheek with shame. Look now at the peculiar obligation resting upon one "born of the Spirit," to glorify God. It may be illustrated by the case of the ten lepers. They were reduced to the lowest point of human wretchedness—shut out from friends and the endearments of domestic life. They suffered excruciating pain. The plague-spots showed that they were withering under the judgments of God. From all this degradation and misery, Christ delivered them. Could you have witnessed the change, you would feel the point of the inquiry, "*Where are the nine?*" Surely some expression of thanks is due from *such* men to *such* a Benefactor. What then does God expect of those who are rescued from a condition of which the poor lepers' state was only a faint emblem; of those who are "*brought out of darkness into marvellous light*?

1. If you would feel the obligation, you must look at the *greatness of the favor.* And to estimate this, take into view the *lost condition* in which you were found. Here we wish you to remember the impression made upon your mind by the Spirit of God:—you felt all the strong figures employed in the Bible to describe your natural state, to be true—you

were, in a fearful sense, in a "*horrible pit*," under sentence of death—justly condemned by the law—your hearts were desperately wicked—your bosoms agitated with a tempest of passion. Have you not still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall? Look also at the *magnitude of the change.* You were *taken out* of that horrible pit. The sentence of the law was reversed—you were acquitted—received into divine favor—adopted into the family of God—sealed with the Spirit, the earnest of your inheritance. Is there nothing due for *such* blessings bestowed upon such a sinner?

2. Think of the glorious *Author* of your deliverance. Obligation is great in proportion to the character of the Benefactor. He is so infinitely exalted that he needs not our services. The motive for aiding us was found only in himself. So that salvation is all of grace. What less can we do then, than to speak forth his praise? If he pitied us when we were enemies, shall we not, when reconciled, live to his glory? We should honor his word by trusting in it—we should honor his providence by committing all to his care—we should honor his laws by obeying them—we should honor his church by serving it faithfully.

3. It is the *express object of this work to bring praise to God.* Jesus Christ did not enjoin it upon the lepers to return—true gratitude would have prompted them—so great a blessing, so remarkable an interposition, affecting the whole subsequent life, essentially changing their relations and destiny, called for a suitable return; but we are not left to spontaneous feeling; God has signified his design in calling us into his kingdom. He says to his children, *I have spared your lives, and ye shall be mine. Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* He imposes his command, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. For this is the will of God, that with well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Common justice would lead to an acknowledgment of mercies bestowed under such circumstances, but the appeal is to every high and honorable feeling in our nature. How right and reasonable that we come to his feet, and inquire, *Lord what wilt thou have us to do?*

II. *Those of least promise often shine the brightest.* "And he was a Samaritan." He belonged to a nation that was despised. He could have known but little of the character or claims of the Messiah. He was the last that might have been expected to return. While the others forgot their benefactor, "this stranger" gave the most gratifying evidence of the depth of his humility and the strength of his love. Often has this been exemplified in the church of God. While many who run well for a season, have turned back to the world, while some of those most confi-

dent of their good estate have relapsed into stupidity and sin, others who at first had but little light, but faint hopes, who scarcely dared to follow in the footsteps of the flock, have persevered in duty, made advancement in knowledge, risen in spiritual stature, their path shining more and more unto the perfect day. We can tell but little of Christian character from its first appearance. When the sympathies are excited, and the social feelings are enlisted, and the tide sets in strong in favor of religion, many profess attachment to Christ, who afterwards give but little evidence. On the other hand some, of whom we are ready to stand in doubt, who are encompassed with many infirmities, like feeble childhood, still make progress in the divine life, and rise to vigorous manhood.

III. *Many who experience signal mercies at the hand of God evince great ingratitude.* It is said that *all* those lepers were cleansed. Their petition was granted—Jesus had compassion on them and restored them to the enjoyment of life, which before was a burden. What a humbling view of human nature does it give to learn that *one only* of the whole number manifested a disposition suitably to acknowledge the benefits received. It has often been so. In the case of the nine, they were without the shadow of excuse for ingratitude. But this dark feature of depravity often cleaves to us even after we enter the visible church. Paul, whose great excellencies, whose untiring faithfulness, left no room for the charge of neglect, still had cause to complain of many he admitted to his fellowship. The great Head of the church, in establishing the means of grace, in appointing the ordinances of his house, and enacting the laws of his kingdom, doubtless had reference to a proper expression of attachment and confidence, as well as to the interests of his church. Hence we find that those whose hearts are softened by divine grace, who give evidence of religion, at the first are inclined to seek the Lord in the way of his appointment, even before they have specially consulted the law. The institutions of the gospel, prayer, the word, the sacraments, are the natural channels of Christian affection. Strict and conscientious observance of them, therefore, becomes a test of character, and shows the state of the heart. How should a redeemed sinner evince his gratitude to the Savior, if not by confession, by setting forth his most worthy praise, by waiting upon him in acts of worship, and striving to influence others to love and serve him? Our divine Benefactor, for our good, and because he would employ our service for the benefit of others, asserts a claim. He has appointed methods in which we are to express a sense of obligation. This appears so reasonable, that we voluntarily enter into covenant to observe his rules, engaging to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless; and gratitude for such favors as we have received could not do less. When therefore the professed people of God, forsake the

closet, neglect social prayer, family worship, or the observance of the Sabbath, the inquiry may be solemnly made, *Do you thus requite the Lord?* Brethren, does the charge of ingratitude lie against *us?* I speak to those who have recently lifted up their hands unto God. Have you neglected secret prayer? have you transferred your affections again to the world? You once professed to give up every idol. Have you ceased to speak of Christ? You once were warm in his praise, and were not ashamed of him—you could "tell to those around, what a Savior you had found." Do you neglect meetings for prayer? You once regarded them with interest, found them quickening and profitable. O, how mean and unworthy to suffer indolence, or worldly business to take stronger hold of your heart than the cause of God! Do you neglect the Bible? It was once your delight. How can you undervalue this precious communication, this epistle of love from the Friend of sinners? Do you forsake the sanctury? Once you were glad when the friends of Zion said, *Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord.* Do you forsake the sacrament of the holy supper, or attend upon it with coldness? Once with holy awe and ardent love you desired to meet the Savior at his table. These are solemn inquiries; too solemn to be passed over in haste. Ingratitude to Christ, as we have seen, involves the deepest guilt; it is a denial of infinite obligations—it is a violation of covenant engagements. Having once enlisted under the banner of the cross there is no release. The true Christian desires none. The unstable and double-minded cannot draw back, without falling into perdition.

IV. *Jesus will make inquisition in regard to those who fail to give glory to God.* "*But where are the nine?*" He had not forgotten *their* obligation, though they neglected to acknowledge *his* goodness. In this implied censure he has taught us our accountability, a truth we are prone to forget. We are apt to make our feelings the standard. When the impression of God's mercy is fresh and lively, we are ready to say that we are bound to live to him, to magnify his grace and exalt his honor; but when selfishness prevails, and we seek our own things, when we neglect our duty, when the affections are languid, or are pervaded by worldliness, then we lose a sense of obligation, conscience slumbers, and in our folly we seem to imagine that God doth not regard. The infidelity of the heart returns with its carnality; and as we go back to former habits of thought and life, we contract the hardness, the sophistry, the impenitence and unbelief of the unrenewed nature. In this we see the blinding, deceitful influence of sin. This explains the unconcern that often appears in a church that has fallen into moral sleep. They reason from the logic of a deceitful heart, and not from the immutable truths of God's word, and are thus deceived, often fatally. They act under the monstrous delusion, that God is

altogether such an one as themselves. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*—because judgment slumbers, they think but little blame attaches to neglect of duty. But moral obligation does not depend upon feeling; it is connected with permanent relations; it remains amidst all our fluctuations of joy and sorrow, hope and fear; it is imposed by divine goodness, and cannot be thrown off while we share in God's bounty, have a place in his church, or are the subjects of his government. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The *number* of those spiritually healed is registered, as well in the book of his remembrance, as on the records of the church; and if any are deficient in duty, or fail to fulfill their vows, he will make inquisition. He is too much interested in *them*, as well as his cause, to suffer them to pursue a course injurious to both, without calling them to account. As he is in all places, and knows the secrets of all hearts, the history of all lives, it is not imaginary to suppose him present in the place of prayer, and looking round upon every vacant seat, noting every absent disciple, to enquire of those who have come to worship in his name, *Where are the nine?* And on the Sabbath, he stands upon the sacred heights of the sanctuary; marks those who, from any cause which he cannot approve, are not in his house, rendering praise to God; and asks, *Where are the nine?* We know that he is at the feast of the gospel passover, to refresh his people, to communicate his grace; and that he has commanded all his followers to be there to show forth his death; we may suppose that he will cast his searching eye over the assembly, and grieving to find any absent, will turn to the faithful and demand, *Where are the nine?* If the under shepherd or the office-bearers overlook any, and fail to be faithful or kind, that does not diminish your obligation to Christ, or render your vows less binding, and Christ himself will not overlook you. Some, like the woman who hid herself in the crowd, unwilling to acknowledge her cure, imagine that they are not known, and may therefore neglect to honor God without detection; but he who inquired, *Who touched me?*—he who knew that virtue, or healing power, had gone out of him, will complain; he will, sooner or later, make inquisition. When Peter, following his Master afar off, and ashamed to be known as his disciple, took his place with the servants, he imagined that he was unknown; he felt secure in his obscurity; but there was one there who knew him, who brought him out. And though you may be on a journey, among strangers, or in retirement, if you are shrinking from duty, and thus denying Christ, the providence of God will reveal your sin —you may be sure it will find you out. He is a *just God*, as well as Savior, and will therefore search, as with rays of light, every lurking place. He knows *where you are*, when absent from your sphere of duty.

V. Jesus will not only inquire after those who are guilty of neglect towards him, but he will take account of *the effects of such ingratitude.* Their own souls sustain deep and lasting injury. Such base treatment of the Son of God diminishes self-respect, destroys confidence in their good estate, induces darkness of mind. As obedience not only carries with it its own reward, but invigorates the moral powers in various ways, so does neglect of duty prove its own punishment, and give a shock to the moral sensibilities.

Such ingratitude as we have described *injures the church.* They rejoiced in the acquisition of numbers, and magnified the grace of God so largely bestowed upon men. Their expectations in regard to Zion were raised by seeing so many coming to her solemn feasts. They hoped that a larger cloud of incense would go up to heaven, and more efficient efforts be made for the conversion of sinners. They looked for great results. Alas, how does it try the faith, and increase the anxiety of the church, to see numbers virtually turn away from Christ, and walk no more with him. It is a great drawback to spiritual enjoyment for the established believer, to go to the circle of prayer, the place of accustomed meeting, and find many absent who were seated with him at the communion table, and who there renewed their solemn vows—he is ready to ask, Where are those who so recently gave themselves to the Lord and promised to be his forever? His mind is distracted. He mourns over disappointed hopes.

Great injury is also thus done *to the world.* The word is rendered ineffectual. Sinners will reject the gospel, so long as they see its professed friends indifferent to its truths. The natural heart is full of unbelief; this is strengthened greatly by the instability of nominal Christians. This one objection, *where are the nine?* where is the fruit of all those blossoms? where is the redemption of all those vows? will blunt the edge of truth, and throw a shield around the impenitent heart. O, brethren, by what arithmetic can you compute the amount of evil resulting from unfaithfulness to Christ? You will not consider me your enemy because I tell you the truth. God is witness, how greatly I desire your salvation and usefulness. Is it said, "there is too much distance in the church?" It is true, but does that excuse distance from Christ? Is it said, "the members are neglected?" It is true. I plead guilty. I have asked forgiveness of God; but will that afford you any comfort under the consciousness that you neglect your duty. Remember it is Christ you grieve by your ingratitude. If you blush to meet him in his house, how can you meet him on his throne? If you deny him here, will he not deny you there? What is to be done? *O Lord, revive thy work. Spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach.*

SERMON CLX.

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CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF REVIVALS.

HOSEA vi. 4—*O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*

The dealings of God with the children of Israel were eminently calculated to impress them deeply and influence them powerfully. Who could have witnessed the plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud and of fire, the healing of the waters at Marah, the gift of the quails and the manna, the promulgation of the law at Sinai, the blossoming of Aaron's rod, the flood of waters from the smitten rock, the destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and of Nadab and Abihu, the scene connected with the plague of the fiery serpents, the death of an entire generation in the wilderness, including Moses and Aaron, the passage of Jordan, the taking of Jericho, the conquest of Canaan, the settlement of the children of Israel in the land of promise, their subsequent history under the judges and kings, the many and peculiarly striking dispensations of Providence of which they were the subjects, connected with the ordinances of religion, and the instructions and warnings of prophets who came to them with divinely attested commissions,—who could have witnessed these, I say, and not be convinced of Jehovah's presence? That they were frequently and powerfully impressed, admits of no doubt. Humble acknowledgments were often made, and hopeful appearances were induced.

But who does not know how soon these impressions were erased from their minds, and how transient the reformations they produced?—how often like the morning cloud and the early dew? Take for an illustration the solemnities which occurred at Sinai. The declared object of their coming thither is to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are sanctified to hold a solemn interview with Him. They are daily feeding on the manna, and slaking their thirst with water which flowed from the smitten rock. The dreadful thunderings and lightnings which had appalled their souls, had however scarcely subsided; the awful voice, which they besought the Lord that they might hear no more, had scarcely ceased to sound in their ears; when they openly denied the God of Israel, and constrained Aaron to make them a golden calf as an object of worship. Other occasions occurred, when seemingly deep and solemn impressions were made on their minds; impressions which we should suppose could never be erased; which however soon vanished away, and left no trace behind. Facts of this description gave rise to the complaint in our text.

It is not improbable, that while reading of such occurrences, the thought has passed through the mind, that the children of Israel were a

singularly strange and stupid people. Yet, my dear hearers, in this very thing, "there is nothing new under the sun." While the human heart retains its character, and there remains a world to allure and a devil to tempt, there will be calls to unslumbering watchfulness; there will be danger of dread revolt and of severe divine rebuke. Nay, my friends, if we see no present reason for such rebuke with respect to God's American Israel, we are inattentive or unskillful observers of "the signs of the times."

Our beloved country has been the theatre on which God has displayed the wonders of his love and power. He has opened over us the windows of heaven, and poured down blessings in rich abundance. He has come down like rain upon the mown grass. Revival has followed revival, till they have been witnessed as common occurrences. Thousands of sinners have been solemnly impressed—thousands have been converted to God. Thousands of Christians have been refreshed. And yet, revivals of religion have for the most part been of short continuance. Christians have grown cold and inactive, when they had the most reason to be warm and devoted. Serious impressions have worn off from many, when they should have been deepening. Conversions have ceased just at the pointof time when they should have been multiplied. Why have these things been so? It is a cheap and easy mode of disposing of this question to say, "God is a sovereign—Jehovah has withdrawn the influences of his Spirit." I solemnly protest against thus laying the sins of men to God's charge. Let us never dive into the secret counsels of the Lord, to ascertain what his word and providence have written as in sunbeams. Reasons enough exist in the church and people of God, to account for all, in relation to this subject, with which we have any concern. To some of the reasons why revivals of God's work decline, your attention will now be directed, premising that the preacher fully admits the divine sovereignty, and the special influences of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the sanctification and comfort of saints. Paul went not too far when he said, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

1. The first cause of declension to which I would direct your attention is, *the lack of well-directed and persevering exertion on the part of the professed followers of the Lord Jesus.* God works by means in the kingdom of his grace, as well as in the kingdom of nature. He has established a very close connection between *planting* and *watering* and that *increase* which it is his glorious and sovereign prerogative to bestow. Although we cannot, in this thing, make one hair white or black, yet hath he committed the rich treasure to earthen vessels. He uses human agency to preach the gospel; to multiply and disseminate copies of the Bible; and to make and scatter religious tracts, those mute yet divinely eloquent messengers of the divine mercy. Human agency is also employed to provide the men and means to bear the messages of love to the perishing heathen; to conduct Sabbath schools, those nurseries of heaven, in which millions of young immortals are trained for usefulness on earth and glory in the world of spirits. And men must offer up those prayers by which the windows of heaven are shut and opened. And there has often been observed a striking proportion between the character of the means used, and the effects produced. When we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. When the church of God is "clear as the sun and fair as the moon," she is "terrible as an army with banners." It is

recorded of the people of God, that when they *walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they* WERE MULTIPLIED.

Now it has often been observed, that when the Spirit is poured out from on high, and the work of the Lord revived, not only is the gospel preached with unusual frequency, pungency and affection, but the prayers of God's people are offered up with unwonted fervency and importunity; there is a beauty and consistency about their lives, which exemplifies the religion they profess; and an affection and urgency about the instructions and invitations they address to sinners, which render them deeply impressive. They become anxious, and are often heard to inquire what they must do to be saved; and at such times many are convinced, and converted unto God.

After a while, new cases of awakened interest and serious impresssion diminish, and at length cease, and many who have been impressed gradually decline and fall back. Now, if you inquire, you will find that there has been not only a simultaneous, but a preceding declension on the part of professors of religion. One and another has begun to absent himself from the praying circle. One and another has lost his fervency in devotion. One and another has ceased to feel for sinners, and exert himself as he once did. And before the church is aware of her danger, the work of God has ceased, and the harp is hung upon the willows. The probability is that if the church had maintained her ground, the work of God would have progressed with increased interest and strength. Let Christians weigh this matter well; for if they cannot prove that they are straitened in God, who has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain," they have a tremendous responsibility.

2. Another reason for the declension of revivals is, *the self-sufficiency of men.* God, as we have shown, works by means. We are accustomed to see what we denominate the means of grace, attended with wonderful effects in the conviction and conversion of sinners. We find a connection established between them in the word of God, and are imperceptibly led to lose sight of the efficient cause—so far, at least, as to forget our entire dependence. Against this proud delusion, neither ministers of the gospel nor private Christians are always on their guard. Those to whom their labors may have been blest, often assist the delusion. It is not an easy thing to repress pride, vain glory and self-sufficiency, when we believe, or are told, that such a sermon, exhortation, admonition, or prayer, was the means of conviction, conversion or comfort to souls. We can easily be made to believe that it is so, and then to feel no small degree of complacency arising from it. In such a state of mind, we may easily be led to expect more from our efforts than facts will warrant, and look for the results of faith from the exercise of presumption. While God honors the faith which is the fruit of his own Spirit, he frowns our presumption into the dust. Is not this a reason why we are left to gather the apples of Sodom while we are vainly expecting the fruit of the tree of life? If we imbibe any portion of that spirit in which Nebuchadnezzar cried, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom?" we may expect his reward. Samson had exercised his great strength so long that he forgot where it lay, and went out with his locks shorn, yet saying, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself; and he wist not that the Lord had departed from him."

Such a spirit is much more frequently exercised, it is to be feared, than

that which animated Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, when, after one of his splendid victories, in passing through a village, he was greeted with more honor than he thought due to any mortal, he rebuked the multitude by saying, "If ye treat me as a god, God will soon show you that I am no more than a man." When we do not act under the influence of such a spirit of humble dependence, God will write his "Ichabod" upon our efforts, and leave us to the weakness of our own strength. From this we may learn why our clouds often produce so little rain, and why the chariot of the gospel frequently stops short in the midst of its course. In this work, peculiarities of modes are comparatively nothing; *humble reliance upon God, in the use of means which he has appointed, every thing.* Let us beware how we mar God's work by using our own untempered mortar. Let this be every minister's motto—every Christian's motto, "Son of man, can these dry bones live? O Lord God, thou knowest."

3. There is another cause of a directly opposite nature to the last, which exerts an unhappy influence on the progress of revivals: I mean *a professed dependence on God not warranted by his word.* In this way the doctrines of the divine sovereignty and the influences of the Holy Spirit are sadly abused. The thorough Antinomian is continually on the rack lest he should dishonor God by the use of means in the accomplishment of the purposes of divine love and mercy. Sometimes also there appears to be so little of human agency in the production of revivals, that men of better principles and better feelings have, before they were aware of it, fallen into the same spirit, and sunk down into a state of inactivity and apathy. Thus the devil leads men to pervert the truth concerning the sovereignty of God, and to pamper their sloth by pretending to honor Jehovah, when in fact they are only excusing their own sins.

Now there may be very little visible human agency in the *commencement* of some revivals. There may be nothing more than the ordinary preaching of the gospel, and still sinners, in greater or less numbers, may be awakened and converted to God. And it is sometimes as it were the salvation of a church, that the Lord should thus come; otherwise the church might die, or sink in deep disgrace. But most certainly this is not God's ordinary mode of proceeding in a revival. And even if he thus commence his work, he does not thus carry it on. No one ever yet witnessed an extensive and long continued work of grace, where a church remained cold or inactive. With her declension the work has declined. If God said, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," it was immediately added, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." We cannot hope in God, except we use the appointed means. He has promised good to Israel; but he has also said, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." While he will have us *trust*, as if we felt that all our sufficiency was of him, he will have us *act*, as if all depended upon our efforts. A contrary course has caused many a hopeful prospect to vanish away. O when shall we learn true wisdom?

4. *The very enjoyment* experienced in a revival of religion is sometimes the cause of its declension. The cup may appear to be so full, that we do not feel the necessity of having it replenished. We are easily led to think, that after our toils and labors have been so abundantly blessed of the Lord, we may now sit down and enjoy the pleasant fruit in peace and quietness. We are now *rich and increased with goods, and have*

of nothing, and may say to the soul, Take thine ease. While enjoying the fellowship of those who have been born of God, we lose sight of the far greater number who are still without God and without hope. We feel not the power of temptation, and fondly flatter ourselves that the old serpent's head is crushed beneath our feet. We feel it so good to be on the mount, that we sometimes incline to slumber there.

Think it not strange, my friends, if I tell you, that many a veteran has dropped asleep on this ground, and many a warm-hearted recruit has slumbered by his side. The latter is in peculiar danger. Unacquainted with the trials of the Christian life, and the dangers of the Christian warfare, it is not very surprising, that after he has fought his way to the cross, under the pressure of a heavy burden, and through hosts of opposing foes, and found peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost, he should fondly imagine that all his trials are over, and that he shall accomplish the remainder of the journey without toil or trouble. Whereas, in fact, the warfare commences at this point. Strange, that the very fullness of our table should be made a snare to us, and the exuberance of the divine goodness cause us to forget our most important duties!

These things ought not so to be. On the contrary, the manifestations of the divine goodness should make us more zealous and more active in the Lord's service. But alas, it may be recorded of others beside Hezekiah, "He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him."

5. *Want of faith in the divine promises*, is another cause why revivals decline. We are afraid to give that full scope to the divine promises which the language in which they are couched will warrant. When a number have been brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous light, we seem to think that all has been done that we may hope for. This sentiment, has a natural tendency to contract our desires, cool our ardor, and restrain our prayers and exertions; and as a natural consequence, to limit the blessing which might be expected on perseverving and well directed efforts. But here, again, we are not straitened in the Lord, but in our own souls. Why should we limit the Holy One of Israel? Why should we circumscribe his promises? Will any one say, Because heretofore the work of conversion has stopped at a given point? Was the work ever known to stop while faith was in exercise? Did the Holy Spirit ever withdraw his influences till he was grieved by unbelief and sin?

How do we know that it is not the will of God that every sinner within the bounds of a congregation, a village, a city, a state or a continent should be converted to him? Why should we suppose that the time has not come? Not only are all things possible with God, but he warrants our strongst faith with his exceedingly great and precious promises. We may lay hold on his omnipotence. What did the Savior mean, when he said, "All things are possible to him that believeth?" Now what does God say to his people? "Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will *fill it*." "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." And what are the Lord's designs concerning our world? That his gospel shall be preached to every creature under heaven; that he will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh; that the Lord Jesus Christ shall receive the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Why are not these blessed promises fulfilled? Can you give me a better reason than that his church is still full of that unbelief which freezes the hearts, restrains the prayers and

paralizes the arms of his people? Banish this unbelief from the church, and revivals will never cease. "The word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified." The circle of divine influence will be so extended that it shall embrace the whole earth. God says continually, "Stretch thy desires abroad."

6. *Want of concert in desire, in prayer, and in effort,* is another reason why revivals do not continue longer and spread wider. Says the Savior, "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Why does not this promise apply in all its force, to revivals of religion? Do *they* not concern the divine glory? Do *they* not harmonize with the purposes of divine love and mercy, as declared in the Scriptures? A contrary supposition would be a libel on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples, waiting for "the promise of the Father," were of one heart and one mind, and continued instant in prayer. There is more in this than we are apt to imagine. An insulated individual may be able to accomplish comparatively little—yet, under God, he can do *something*. Associate one with him, of the same heart and mind, and you more than double his strength, as well as increase his courage. Elijah *alone*, is a very different man from Elijah associated with seven thousand in Israel, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. O, how verdant and beautiful would the church appear in the midst of this barren wilderness, if each of her members, in harmony and concert with his fellows, were found cultivating the little spot assigned him with care and assiduity, and when occasion required it, all uniting their strength and efforts! Soon would the cheering voice be heard, "Lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes." The streams of grace from the wells of salvation would flow forth with a deeper and more rapid current. The verdant spot would become enlarged, until it should embrace the whole earth—and "trees of righteousness" would every where spring up, and "the fruit thereof should shake like Lebanon," and "the leaves thereof should be for the healing of the nations."

Were we to examine our churches with a reference to this point, we should be equally astonished and grieved. Even in our seasons of deepest and holiest interest, most fervent prayer, strongest exertion, and richest blessing, we should not perhaps find one half of the church, perhaps in many cases not even a tenth, to have entered fully into the spirit of the work. Many would be found to have been entirely unmoved. Some in the ranks of opposition. And many who appeared most active, would be found influenced by mere temporary feeling, excited by sympathy. While the real "working men" in the Lord's vineyard, the men of spiritual "bone and muscle," the men who faint not in prayer, but "bear the heat and burden of the day," "the sacramental host" who "stand shoulder to shoulder," and steadily follow "the Captain of salvation," would be found a "little flock." Such a survey would do away our surprise that revivals so soon cease—that so little is accomplished. Nay, it is matter of wonder that even so much is done by such feeble means.

7. *The indulgence of a sectarian, or party spirit,* has an unhappy influence on revivals of religion. Many a hopeful prospect has been blasted by it. It is among the arrangements of Providence, that various sects should exist in his church; though they have doubtless been occasioned by the obliquity of man, and if good arises out of them, it is because they are overruled by Jehovah; according to that

declaration, "the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." It is a revealed truth, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." So long as our differences are maintained in a Christian spirit, provoking us to godly jealousy and good works, they may answer useful purposes. But when they put on the form of selfishness, envy, and strife, the Spirit of God cannot abide them, nor will he dwell with them.

This spirit is not very apt to manifest itself in the freshness of a new revival, where the worth and salvation of souls swallows up, for a season, all other considerations. But when the fruits of the work begin to exhibit themselves, we are easily led to calculate our sectional interests in its results and to pursue them as a primary object. This is sometimes done by discussing the points which separate the sects, in the public ministrations; sometimes by making them frequent subjects of conversation; and sometimes by the application of motives addressed to the individual.

When such a spirit gets into operation, we lose sight of the state and danger of sinners, their conversion becomes a secondary object. We cease to follow them up with those arguments and persuasions which the gospel furnishes. Our prayers lose their fervency and importunity, and a disputatious and angry spirit is engendered, which grieves the blessed Comforter, and causes him to depart. He cannot dwell in such a scene. He will not bless our selfish efforts. Men thus seek their own, when they should be seeking the things of Christ. Thus souls are ruined, and the Savior is dishonored, and hell rejoices. It may be that offences must come, but wo to them by whom they come. There is a fearful responsibility attached to such a course, in which all should be afraid to involve themselves. Let it be remembered that the highest object at which we can aim is *the glory of God in the salvation of sinners*, and let us be careful how we hinder this great work.

8. The last particular to which I would direct your attention, as injurious to the progress of revivals is, *an undue excitement of the mere animal part of our nature.* I say, *undue* excitement, because it is impossible to affect the mind to any great extent, and not influence our bodily sensations by it. The connection between mind and body is very intimate. Nor is it surprising that the body should deeply feel the influence of the mind, when employed upon subjects of such high and tremendons import, as those which religion presents. Nor is religion irrespective of the body. God requires the service of the body as well as of the mind. And it is right that it should be so, for man is not a purely intellectual being. It is, however, to the soul that God addresses himself, and from the impressions which he makes on the soul, does religion arise. And just so far as mere bodily sensations predominate, do they lower the character of our religion. The apostle Paul makes an admirable distinction when, in writing to Timothy he says, "Bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The impressions which truth, when rightly presented to the mind, produces, do not, generally, to any very great extent, affect the body. I say, *when rightly presented*, for truth may be *so* presented, as to have its principal effect on the imagination or the nerves, leaving the understanding without much light or conviction, and the heart without any emotions of genuine love to God or sorrow for sin.

Do you ask, In what way does high excitement operate unhappily on revivals of religion, particularly with respect to their continuance? Let it be observed, that high excitement cannot be long maintained without a miracle. The human body cannot bear it. Health would soon decline, and the nerves would become a wreck. If it were originally a purely mental excitement, long continued, it would inevitably wear out the body. And whatever exercise the soul, in a disembodied state, might endure, it admits of no dispute, that, connected as it is with the body, after intense application, it sighs for relaxation, and if it be not relieved, it breaks down under the pressure. If then, high excitement be necessary to revivals of religion, the very laws which govern our nature render it absolutely necessary that they be short-lived, in proportion to the height of the excitement. It would then be a mercy that they are not of long continuance. The necessity, however, is not admitted.

Let it be farther observed, that action and reaction are equal. Undue excitement will consequently be followed by a proportionate depression. It might therefore be anticipated, that a revival which has been accompanied by a highly excited state of feeling, would be soon succeeded by coldness and inactivity.

My dear friends, this is not mere fancy, an idle speculation. I would it *were* nothing more. It is mournful history of mournful facts. It is one of the instruments with which the enemy destroys the carved work of the sanctuary—one of the clogs which he fastens to the wheels of the chariot of salvation to retard its progress through the earth.

It has thus been attempted, to exhibit some of the causes which retard the progress of revivals of religion, and disappoint the hopes entertained of their continuance and extended results. The views which have been taken are now affectionately submitted to your serious and prayerful consideration. The preacher rejoices in having been a *friend*, an *old* friend, to revivals. His public life was commenced under the sunshine of Jehovah's favor, amid the gentle and long continued, but refreshing rain of divine grace, and he has lived to record his gratitude to God, for repeated visitations of his mercy, extending through near a quarter of a century. He has endeavored to make you acquainted with the fruit of his experience in relation to the particular point which has engaged our attention.

It has not been designed, in any wise, to disparage efforts for the promotion of revivals, but to show how they may be rendered more pure, become of longer continuance, and be productive of greater blessings.

It is firmly believed, and fondly expected, that a more glorious day for the church is near at hand. And that day will be accelerated, as well as characterized, by revivals of religion. But revivals so purely scriptural as to throw the devices of men into the shade, and exhibit in Pentecostal relief the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. O, when that day comes, the subjection of the world to Christ will no longer be a problem.

But before that day, the church herself has much to learn on the subject of revivals. She must study them diligently and prayerfully by the light of God's holy oracles, and then shall she know her own state and duty. In this every Christian has a deep and a direct interest. They are all called into the Lord's vineyard to labor there. And the Lord seems to be renewing the exhortation, "Cast ye up, cast ye up: prepare the way, take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of my people."

Of these stumbling-blocks, there are not a few which require to be removed. To point them out has been the object of this discourse. I ask you my brethren, is there not a lamentable deficiency of well-directed and persevering exertion? Is there nothing of self-sufficiency when men talk, perhaps loudly, of "getting up revivals?" Is there that entire dependence on God to which our utter impotence calls us? Do not some sit down to enjoy the blessing, instead of prosecuting their labors with new zeal and diligence? Are they not afraid to exercise that enlarged and strong faith which the promises of God not only allow, but require? Is there no lack of concert in desire, in prayer, and in effort? Is the peculiar spirit of sects dead? Is not mere excitement often sought after, and relied on, instead of the deep, and holy, and transforming influences of the Divine Spirit? In a word; Are not revivals too much like a morning cloud, and the early dew? And yet there is nothing in their nature, nor in the word of God, which forbids their continuance and spread, till every saint shall be thoroughly revived and sanctified, and every sinner converted.

If there are hindrances in the way, let them be sought out, and removed, and let each one lay hold of that hindrance which lies the nearest to his own door, and see to it that *it* be removed. Let each one be sure that his own spirit and conduct is in harmony with the will of God and the influences of the Holy Spirit. Ah! the church, in its various branches, has yet much to mourn over, much to repent of.

Let each of us labor to bring this subject home to our bosoms, and as certain our own responsibilities. Let us ask ourselves, does no sin lie at my door? Have I never grieved away the Holy Spirit by my sloth, my lack of faith and prayer and confidence in God, my sectarian selfishness, my presumption, denominated by an apostle, "faith without works," my reliance on excited feelings without grace? Let us not be afraid to come to the law and the testimony to learn our faults and our duties. We have much to learn, and if we will sit down to the study of the holy oracles with an humble, teachable and prayerful spirit, we shall lack none of that wisdom which is profitable to direct. We shall then be found fellow-workers with God in building up his holy kingdom, and be happily instrumental in hastening on "the latter day glory."

And now let it be remembered, let it be impressed upon our hearts, that every denomination, every church, every Christian, every human being, has a deep interest in revivals of religion—in their existence, their purity, and their results. They are the peculiar displays of the power and grace of God, for the good of souls. They have no enemies but the enemies of God and human happiness. Let it then be our prayer, and labor too, that they may gloriously prevail, and spread, and fill the whole earth. And let God, through Christ, have all the glory. Amen.

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SERMON CLXI.

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THE LOVELINESS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

1 Peter, iii. 8.—*Love as brethren.*

Christianity, like its heavenly Author, is *love.* In the beautiful language of another, "Jesus Christ was an incarnation of love in our world. He was love, living, breathing, speaking, acting amongst men. His birth was the nativity of love, his sermons the words of love, his miracles the wonders of love, his tears the meltings of love, his crucifixion the agonies of love, his resurrection the triumph of love."

Christianity he has left behind him, as the representative of his character, the written image of himself, and has breathed into the whole system his own spirit, and rendered it living with love. This system is the system of the church, the system of every individual member of the brotherhood; and its breath of life it has infused into every heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ, and made him a living soul, alive with the fervor of love. Hence the Bible every where recognizes it as characteristic of the disciples of Christ, and in a variety of manner, and with unwonted frequency and emphasis, brings it into view as the invaluable and necessary possession of every Christian. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." The objects of this affection are all perceptive beings, all capable of happiness. It embraces God, and clings to him supremely, as ineffably excellent, and infinitely superior in worth to all other beings: his holy angels also, as reflections of the brightness of his glory: and even his enemies it regards with benevolence, although not with approbation. But it has a peculiar operation in reference to all who are brethren of Christ, members of his body, and beautifully knits them together in love. To this exhibition of love, or this mode of its operation, the Apostle alludes, when he exhorts Christians in the text, to *love as brethren.*

I shall therefore take occasion from these words, to explain, briefly *the nature,* but principally *the operation and effects* of brotherly love.

I. Love is a complex emotion of the soul, the elements of which are, a pleasurable feeling awakened by the contemplation of some appropriate object, and a desire for the good of that object. Of this emotion there are

various modification, expressed by different names; and there are, of course, different objects that will excite it, and variously modify its operation.

Other feelings, therefore, embraced under the general term, *love*, or nearly allied to it, may be mistaken for that peculiar affection, that bond of peace, which unites *Christians* in one body "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, making increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love."

It must not be supposed to consist in that *natural affection* existing among members of the same family, nor in that *amiable good nature*, which fills the breast with the milk of human kindness, and leads, as if by instinct, to acts of beneficence. Neither is it to be mistaken for *denominational attachment*, that which is felt for those who profess the same creed, and worship in the same mode with ourselves, nor for that *fond affection and cordial friendship*, which often bind, in sweet union, those who discover congeniality of temper, or have, by circumstances, become peculiarly intimate. It must be distinguished also, from *that benevolence*, which yearns over a dying world, and moves to vigorous efforts for its salvation.

These feelings will certainly exist in the heart of the *Christian*, in connexion with the love of the brethren, but may all be found, likewise, in a heart entirely destitute of the love of God: and therefore, although all combined in one lovely being, would constitute no sure proof of a renovated heart, or of preparation for heaven.

In distinction from all these, *brotherly love* is that which animates the bosoms of those who, in the Bible are denominated *the brethren*—it is their love for one another, *as Christians*, disciples of Christ. The Master himself has determined who are his brethren. Not those related to him by natural ties, but *they who hear the will of God and do it.* Christ speaking of his disciples, says, One is your Master, and all ye are brethren. Hence the Apostles, in writing to the churches, adopt this appellation, and address them as faithful brethren, the holy brethren, the brotherhood, and exhort them to love as brethren.

But they are constituted brethren by a moral bond; the same which binds them to Christ himself. There is among them a family likeness in moral qualities. And although there may be no other attractive influence, no connection between them in the relations of society, they have all drunk into one spirit; and whether high or low, rich or poor, literate or illiterate, African, Indian, American, bond or free, they feel themselves knit together in love, being of one accord, of one mind. Hence there is a sympathy pervading the whole; which manifests itself in weeping with those that weep, and rejoicing with them that do rejoice.

But let it be especially noted, that the object which in contemplation excites this emotion, is *moral likeness to Christ.* Wherever we discover the image of Jesus, or see a course of action which evinces the possession of his spirit, there will all the feelings cluster, which may be elements of brotherly love. Let me see an individual of any clime, of any color, of any sect, who, in his walk and conversation is manifestly governed by a regard for the Lord and his annointed, who is cultivating the heavenly dispositions, and holy habits of the gospel, who has embarked in the high interests in which God is engaged, and who sees and feels, loves and hates, as he does, and if I have any brotherly love in me, I see a man, who has higher claims on my regard, and my sympathy, than any of the merely natural relations of life can command. Loving him that begat,

I also love him that is begotten of him. Bound to the throne of God by those moral excellencies which brighten his character, and make him an object of delightful complacency, I am also bound in Christian affection to every son and daughter of Adam, who beholding the glory of God as it shines in the person of Jesus Christ, has been changed into the same image. And as he is the centre of attraction to them all, and they all alike love to sit at his feet, and imbibe his heavenly spirit, so also do they love to contemplate the faintest reflections of his glory wherever visible.

II. But the *effects of brotherly love, or its manner of operation*, is that which more especially interests us.

Since it is not sectarian, but affectionately embraces all who love Christ, and walk in his commandments, it will tenderly regard the feelings, and consult the spiritual benefit of those of other names than that by which itself is known. But as churches are now organized, and all in every place who call upon the name of God, are not associated in one community, it necessarily follows, that the operations of this affection will be generally manifested among those who believe and worship alike.

And while it is expansive as the length and breadth of the church universal, and sympathizes with every member, whose wants and sorrows are known, while it has an ear to hear, and a hand to relieve the miseries of a brother or sister in the most distant clime, it acts specially in reference to those more immediately under its eye, and within its reach.

1. Toward these it will operate in leading us to *avoid all occasions of offence.* It will be our endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and as the elect of God, holy and beloved, to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Oh! if these heavenly affections had a deeper lodgment in the breasts of those who are called the brethren of Christ, how much bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking, and malice, would be put away from the midst of them—how tender would they be of each other's feeling—how kind in word and action—how careful lest even a momentary wound might be inflicted—and how watchful against every occasion of ill-feeling. Where there is real brotherly love in exercise, we shall look upon the least of Christ's disciples as dearer to him than the apple of his eye; and as we love him, we cannot offend any of those little ones who bear his image, and to offend whom would bring upon us a more fearful punishment than if a millstone were hanged about our neck, and we cast into the sea.

Cold looks, harsh words, careless and indifferent action toward the brethren, will therefore be avoided as adapted to give them pain. All that recklessness of the peace of others, which will not stop to calculate consequences, but says and does just as it pleases, must be banished from the breasts of the followers of Christ, and there must come into its place a determination rather to sacrifice our own peace, than for a moment interrupt that of a Christian brother.

2. It will operate, also, in *promoting forgiveness.* In consequence of remaining corruption in the children of God, the variety of natural disposition belonging to them, the different modes of education by which they have been trained, the distinctive classes of society in which they have moved, and the sinful readiness with which some take offence, there do too often occur among professed brethren, injurious speeches, and unwarrantable feelings. Yet these things ought not so to be. We must

forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, and pray to be forgiven ourselves, *as* we forgive those who trespass against us. An unforgiving professor, therefore, who cherishes unkind, untender, revengeful feelings towards any brother, and yet daily offers up the Lord's prayer is imploring God to be revenged on him for his sins, to pardon him, *as* he pardons a trespassing brother—which is by taking vengeance. Oh! can this be the spirit of Jesus, who prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Ah! no. If we be the disciples of Christ, we shall be like him, filled with love, and unwilling for a moment to harbor one feeling of enmity against a fellow Christian. Whenever we suppose ourselves to be maltreated, instead of suffering the imagination to play, and augment a molehill into a mountain, a little rivulet over which we might easily step, into a mighty ocean which it will require weeks, or months, or years to traverse, let us at once discover whether there be any just cause of offence; and if there be, where brotherly love exists, the offender will readily confess his fault, and the injured as heartily forgive; and there will thenceforth be a warmer, and purer, and holier flame of love cementing their hearts, because of the meekness, and gentleness of Christ, which each has seen in the other. As the little children of one family, who often in the course of the day look angrily, and feel soured toward one another, yet say, "Good night," with an affectionate kiss, and in the morning meet again in love; so should it be the care of the dear children of God, the members of the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, to love one another with a pure heart, fervently, and from the heart to forgive every one his brother their trespasses. On this point let every Christian prayerfully ponder the words of Jesus, recorded in Matt. xviii. especially his reply to the inquiry of Peter, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times! Jesus saith unto him, I say not until seven times, but until seventy times seven." And also what he hath said in Mark xi. 25, 26. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven, forgive your trespasses."

3. Another operation of brotherly love is *forbearance*. As the apostle writes to the Ephesian and Colossian brethren, "forbearing one another in love." The term here used is not limited in its signification to the more common acceptation of the English word, a withholding ourselves from injuring any one by the indulgence of anger and wrath: but it implies also, and more especially, *indulgence towards the infirmities of others*—a looking over their peculiarities of thought or manner, and not permitting them to prevent our endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, while they manifest an undoubted attachment to Christ and his cause.

There is much room for the exercise and cultivation of this grace in every Christian community. We are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. We have fellowship with God, and with his Son, and have communion in one Spirit. Yet there are diversities of gifts. Some are wise, and some are ignorant—some strong, and some weak—some babes, and some full grown men in Christ—some learning only the first principles of the oracles of God, and some going on unto perfection—some able to bear only milk, and some strong meat. Now they that are strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves; consulting the edification of their brother; and even sacrifice

their privilege for the sake of the conscientious scruples of weaker brethren.

This operation of brotherly love seems to bear directly on the point of intercourse with other churches. We severally, as denominations, believe ourselves to be *strong*, at least in reference to our system of truth. Let it then be granted, that we the Episcopalians, or we the Methodists, or we the Seceders, or we the Baptists, or we the Presbyterians, are the strong ones of the body of Christ, yet if we regard the others as belonging to the body at all, if we acknowledge them to be followers of Jesus, although we consider them weak in the faith, we are bound, as strong, to bear the infirmities of the weak; and in receiving them, to receive them not to doubtful disputations. And as the eye cannot say unto the hand, "I have no need of thee;" nor again, the head unto the feet, "I have no need of you," no more can we esteem of little account the least, the weakest of the disciples of Jesus Christ. And when we spread a table, whose "bread is the communion of *the body of Christ*," let us not spread it for Presbyterians, or Methodists, or Episcopalians, or any sect as such, but only as the table of the Lord, the place of communion for all who love him. And there may the weakest lamb of the flock go and feed on the pastures of Christ's love; and who shall venture to hinder him?

There are other things which call for forbearance. Constitutional temperament and providential circumstances have had an influence in throwing a variety of character into the church, all the grades of which are more or less modified by the renewing of the Spirit. Hence in many, of whom you cannot doubt that they are actuated by the love of God, the lustre of their piety is dimmed by some uncouthness of manner, some roughness of speech, some abruptness, or forwardness, or disagreeable talkativeness, or some whining and complaining disposition. These things have a tendency to create a dislike, or even disgust; and here we have need for the exercise of brotherly love, that we hide from our view these spots in God's children, and cover the multitude of sins, which might else disaffect us towards some of the most humble and prayerful of God's people. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the *judgment seat of Christ*. Let us not therefore judge one another any more."

4. Another of its effects will be *a disposition to avoid rash judgments*. We are admonished to "speak the *truth in love*." "Charity, or love, rejoiceth in the truth, thinketh no evil, and hopeth all things." Were these sacred sentiments engraven on the hearts of the professed followers of Christ, how much of that precipitancy of judgment, which misconstrues language, and misinterprets actions, would be prevented in the brotherhood, and how much more nearly should we conform to the exhortation of the Apostle, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Such judging of the conduct of others is utterly inconsistent with the exercise of brotherly love, and the Christian spirit. Some there are, who are ever ready to attribute the actions of fellow Christians to improper motives, and viewing them unconnected with the concomitant circumstances, (some of which may be known only to the individual himself,) to denounce them as evidence of alienation from the life of God, and destitution of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. In consequence of this hasty prejudgment, the worst possible construction is also put on the remarks of others, and they are interpreted as personal, and deeply wounding to the friends and the cause of the Redeemer. It is especially inconsistent with this love, when small, unessential differences

of opinion in the explanation of scriptural facts, and consequent non-conformity in creed and discipline, are construed into rejection of the faith once delivered to the saints, and made the occasion of hard thoughts, and unkind, severe treatment.

5. Brotherly love will induce Christians to perform the *duty of admonition and reproof.* When we feel deeply and sincerely interested in any one as a friend, we naturally desire that all deformity of character shall be removed, and every thing lovely and of good report cultivated. And if there be the tie of kindness, we have an additional inducement to use our endeavors to this end, in view of the disgrace to the whole family resulting from the defection of any one. In the household of faith, each member of the family is intimately related to every other, and feels very sensibly when the Savior is wounded in the house of his friends. How should all, therefore, maintain a mutual watch, constantly exhort to a holy walk and conversation, and freely reprove manifest inconsistencies.

See what a *privilege* holy David esteemed the reproof of the righteous. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil." And mark what is said of this duty in the wisdom of the Proverbs: "He that refuseth reproof erreth, and he that heareth reproof getteth understanding, and shall be honored. Open rebuke is better than secret love: and faithful are the wounds of a friend."

While this is certainly an incumbent duty of every Christian, and an appropriate manifestation of brotherly love, much caution is requisite in the *manner* of its performance. The reprover must be clothed with humility, and evince no superciliousness, or sense of superiority. There must be nothing of the spirit which prompts to the sentiment, "Stand off, I am holier than thou," but the whole manner should prove to the offending brother or sister, that it springs from love, and that their good, and the interests of Christ's kingdom, are the motives which prompt the reproof. Thus, while administered and received in the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, the church will be kindly affectioned one to another, knit together in love, and growing up into that state in which she will be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

6. Brotherly love will also lead us *to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* The law of Christ is love. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Bearing one another's burdens, therefore, is a necessary effect of this love. Various burdens are laid upon the children of God. Some are exposed to the fiery darts of the wicked one, and almost ready, through unbelief, to sink in despair. Some walk in darkness and have no light. Some are the subjects of personal affliction, in pain all their days, and often prevented from mingling in the songs of Zion, and going up to the house where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, and enjoying the presence of the Spirit. Some are sorrowing for the loss of a dear relation, perhaps like Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not. And others know the sad trial of ungodly wicked husbands, and dissipated, disobedient children, throwing a weight of grief upon their hearts, which none can appreciate, but those who experience it.

Now in all these, and other cases of anxious concern, and dark sorrow, the brethren have an interesting duty to perform, in administering consolation, in counseling, cheering, and applying the balm of Gilead. Oh! there is something wanting here in the church—something which,

shall so bind us together, that when one member suffers, all the members shall suffer with it; when any are in bonds, we shall be bound with them—something which shall bring us into closer union, and wake up within us a purer, more refined, more sensitive, more pervading sympathy, which shall be touched with the feeling of one another's infirmities, and vibrate to the chord of wo which is strung in a brother's heart. Then shall we show to the world, "how good, and how pleasant it is for Christian brethren to dwell together in unity," and then shall we bear each other's burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ, our heavenly Master.

7. This love will influence us to *regard the wants of the poorer brethren.* Perhaps in every church there are some, who, with all their industry and labor, are yet destitute; so that the *poor we have always with us.* Now whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? And see, after the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were filled with the Spirit, how they *voluntarily* sold their possessions, and brought the price for distribution among the more indigent: and how it pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem. See also the labor of *love* which the Hebrews performed, in that they ministered to the saints; and how the Apostle exhorts all Christians—Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, to make collections for the saints, distribute to their necessity, and by *love serve one another.*

And even if we look into the darker dispensation, we shall find the same operation of love towards those who were of the holy nation, the peculiar people, who were related in some sort as Christians. Lev. xxv. 35. "If thy brother be waxen poor, thou shalt relieve him. Thou shalt not give him thy money on usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase." Deut. xv. 7—11. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need. And thy heart shall not be grieved, (shall not grudge, but be cheerful,) when thou givest unto him."

Whether then, we consider the requirements of the law of love under the Old Testament, or the frequent admonitions in reference to ministering to the saints in the New, or the practice of the primitive disciples of Christ, it seems to be a natural and necessary result of *loving as brethren,* that they who have received bountifully of the Lord, will remember his words; how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

It would seem that in order to fufill the requisitions of this love, there ought to be some method established, by which, either through the Pastor or other officers of the church, the richer might communicate of their goods, to the poorer of the household of faith.

8. Many more effects of brotherly love might be mentioned; as the cultivation of free religious conversation, abstinence from envious, suspicious feelings, from evil surmising, malicious construction of motives, tale-bearing, slandering, &c. &c.; but let it be observed finally, that if possessed of this affection, we shall *love those most, who have most of the spirit of Jesus.* From its very nature this will be the result. Were the affection originated by any internal relations, or dependent on any merely natural qualities, it might be otherwise. But since it is awakened by the image of Christ, and is in reality of the same nature with the love we bear to him, as the *elder Brother,* we must of necessity admire and esteem the other members of the family, in the proportion in which they are as-

similated to him. He is supreme in excellence, and surpassing in manifestations of benevolence, and is therefore to be loved as the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely; and his disciples will secure our confidence and affection in the degree in which they possess his loveliness.

Real brotherly love will find its objects in all classes, all colors, all climes, and all sects of evangelical Christians; and wherever it finds most of the spirit of Jesus, there will it flow out the most abundantly, and glow most fervently. It cannot be limited by any ecclesiastical, civil, or domestic connections, but extends to all in every place who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus as an atoning Savior. And as John was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved, probably because his spirit was most subdued, and his manners most softened by the heavenly influence of the Savior's precepts and practice, so now will they be most loved by the brotherhood, who evince the most complete conformity with the image of Christ.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This subject presents *a test of Christian character.* It is manifest from the frequency of its introduction in the gospel of Christ, and the epistles of the several Apostles, from the urgency with which it is pressed on the attention of the church, and from express declarations on this point, that it affords a satisfactory ground of decision as to our character and standing. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." The exercise of love among the brethren, will even convince the world, that you possess the true spirit of the Redeemer. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him: but he that hateth his brother is in darkness." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and *his love* is perfected in us." "If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, *how can he love God* whom he hath not seen?" And we *know* that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren.*" These passages, evidently represent brotherly love as so important an exercise of the Christian, and so essentially of the spirit of the gospel, that any who are conscious of possessing it, may be certified of their interest in Christ, while they who are destitute of it, may be as fully assured of their impenitent, unconverted state.

If then the moral image of Jesus, wherever contemplated, awaken in our bosoms the emotion of love, and lead to its various operations—if that love arise not from natural affection, nor from the unsanctified amiable qualities of another, not from congeniality of temper, or circumstantial intimacy, nor from family or denominational relationship, but from the fact that the individual loved belongs to Christ, and possesses likeness to him, we may appropriate to ourselves all the consolation and peace, which evidence of an interest in the Redeemer is adapted to impart, and go onward, gratefully rejoicing in the Lord, and trusting in the God of our salvation.

2. *How great must be the happiness of heaven.* There love reigns in every breast. All the inhabitants are baptized with this holy feeling. There are they day and night before the throne of the God of love; with Jesus, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person: and of his fulness they all receive, and drink in everlasting draughts of love. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. There is no clashing of interests, no selfishness, or pride, or

envy, or unhallowed ambition; no turmoil, or strife, or divisions; no discords; and no want of harmony in the lofty music of heaven. There all hearts beat in unison, and all its songs are songs of love. Its trees, are trees of life; its rivers, rivers of joy; its bowers, bowers of bliss; its air balmy with peace. Oh! what blissful regions those, where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore: where the God of love makes the brightest manifestations of his glory, holy angels worship with rapturous delight, and the church of the first-born unceasingly glow with fervent emotions of love.

"Love is the golden chain, that binds the happy souls above,
And he's an heir of heaven, who finds his bosom glow with love."

Whose aspirations do not reach after that dwelling-place of love, that holy, happy land, where there will be no more sin, no more curse, nor pain, nor sorrow, nor tears, nor death?

3. *How important to the world is the prevalence of the religion of Jesus Christ.* Its source is the fountain of purity—its tendency, the renovation of the heart, and consequent melioration of the human family—its aim, the perfection of man, and of society. It exhibits Jesus Christ as a model of excellence, and calls upon men every where for conformity with him in spirit and life. It inculcates universal benevolence, and its essence is love—love which operates in abstaining from anger, malice, blasphemy, evil communication, variance, emulations, wrath, strife; and in cultivating whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, as kindness, tenderness, forgiveness, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. Oh! were the spirit of the gospel universally prevalent, were Christianity, with its pervading love, the system of individuals, communities, and nations, what a delightful world would this be! Then would men "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more. Violence should not be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within our borders. The wolf also would dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child should lead them." Peace would cover the earth as a mantle, and joy unspeakable fill every bosom.

Men may talk of the perfectibility of human nature, and present, and try also their systems of philosophy, but all will be in vain without the transforming efficacy of the religion of Jesus. All other plans for the renovation of man, and the production of happiness, have successively and repeatedly failed: this only, where it has been brought to bear on human character, has effected a thorough and permanent change, converting the lion into the lamb, and diffusing through society holy and peaceful principles of action. Let the whole world then be brought to feel its power, and it will be a world of love, even as the New Jerusalem coming down from God, out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband. Let the church only walk forth in the beauty and purity of her heavenly attire, and the world will admire, and be attracted to follow in her train. Let the children of the celestial King walk worthy of their elevated rank, let them stand forth as "the epistles of Christ, read and known of all men," and they may convincingly prove to the world that Christianity is its best boon, and that to embrace it will convert the wilderness into the garden of the Lord, imparting beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and diffusing through all the relations of society such heavenly influences, as clearly to evince the supreme blessedness of that people whose God is the Lord, whose religion the Bible. AMEN.

SERMON CLXII.

By Rev. ANSEL NASH,
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UNION AMONG CHRISTIANS.

1 Corinthians i. 10.—*Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

In the harmony and mutual affection here recommended, is implied agreement in sentiment, in feeling, and in objects of pursuit. When saints are entreated that they all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among them, it must be intended that they should embrace substantially the same views of the doctrines of revelation. When they are likewise entreated to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, the meaning is, that they should be united in their affections, as well as in their views of revealed truth. The essential basis of all union is agreement in sentiment. Without this, what harmony can exist? How can two walk together except they be agreed? What concord can be expected among men while at variance as to essential truths, fundamental principles? Diversity of opinion naturally begets alienation of feeling. But will it be pretended, that it is too much to require of different individuals, that they embrace essentially the same religious sentiments? If all are to derive instruction from the same source, are to draw their opinions from the infallible book of God, and if all will come to the study of this book with honest, humble minds, can there be any necessity for their adopting materially different views? Clearly no other necessity of this kind can exist, except what arises from the temper of mind with which the oracles of God are perused. Since the vision is written and made plain, it must be capable of being understood; and if men attend to it with right feelings they must understand it in substantially the same manner.

It is, however, often asserted, men think differently on all other subjects, and hence they cannot be expected to think alike on the subject of religion. What pertinency and justness soever may be attached to this assertion, it should be ever kept in mind, that religion is the only subject, respecting which we are furnished with a fixed, infallible standard of faith. Men on other subjects are left to the guidance of unassisted reason, and are at liberty to think as seems right in their own eyes; but on this they are required to make the word of God their invariable guide, both as to belief and practice. Beyond all question they who study the inspired volume with honest minds, with sincere desires to know what it teaches, must learn from it essentially the same things. Can it then be unreasonable to require of saints, that they harmonize in their religious opinions? So far as they suffer themselves to be guided simply by reason, the hope of their agreement must be abandoned, for that which appears reasonable to one mind may appear very differently to another. But when God condescends to speak to men in language adapted to their

capacity, what room is left for essential diversity of religious opinion?

In putting their construction on this language, different individuals doubtless may, consistently with rectitude of heart, ascribe to it somewhat different shades of meaning. Probably it is in vain to hope for the entire removal of liability to this, till they shall be raised to regions of clearer light and greater moral purity. In this view of the matter we find ample cause for humiliation and regret, but no cause for alienation of feeling.

But saints are required to show themselves united not in sentiment and affection only, but likewise in objects of pursuit. They are bound to be helpers of each other's joy. For their mutual edification, their growth in grace, their preparation for the heavenly state, they should manifest deep concern. It should be seen that they regard one another as engaged in the same good cause; as members of the same spiritual body; as aiming at the same great and momentous results. Every individual saint should feel deeply, and should make the feeling manifest, that what affects the spiritual community to which he belongs affects himself. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. If one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The *reasons why* such harmony should be cherished, are obvious and abundant. Every view which can be taken of the people of God—of their character, their relation to the Creator, and to one another, their condition and their prospects, their connection with this world and the next—shows that there should be no divisions among them, but that they should be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

For every spiritual blessing they are all indebted to the same grace, and in them all this grace has performed the same work—having renewed their hearts into the image of God—having brought them up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set their feet upon a rock, and put a new song in their mouth, even praise to the living God—having caused them to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Should not an impression of the manifold spiritual blessings, in which they are common sharers, serve to bind their hearts together in love? O my brethren, had not the grace of God interposed in your behalf, where had you now been? If you have just views of what this has done for you, how kind and affectionate must be your feelings towards them who have derived from the same source the consolations and joys which you experience.

But all saints sustain the same relation to the Most High. They have been born of God. From being dead in trespasses and sins, they have by him been quickened to spiritual life. On him do they likewise depend for the support of that life. Of his fullness do they all receive, and grace for grace. To their heavenly Father are they all united by bonds of affection stronger than death. Begotten of God, all having their life sustained by the same gracious influences, and constituting one spiritual family, shall they be separated from each other by mutual alienations and jealousies? Is not here an irresistible reason why they should love one another with a pure heart? O, how can they who sustain so important, so endearing a relation to one common Father in heaven, ever indulge feelings of party spirit and of mutual aversion?

The people of God, moreover, are subject to the same trials, the same enjoyments, the same hopes. They are all compassed about with infirmities, and all beset with sins. They are alike concerned in a conflict with spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Hence they all have the same need of that spiritual armor which the gospel furnishes. None of them can feel too strongly, that all their springs are in God; that if his protection and grace are withdrawn, they shall at once sink

ble, and fall, and be broken. But to them all, the same spiritual, heavenly influences are granted, to raise their souls above the world, to fill them with joy and peace in believing, to afford them an earnest of eternal rest. Saints may come together before their Father's throne, to make known their cares and griefs, to look to him for grace to help in every time of need. How unspeakable the privilege in which they are thus permitted to share.

They all have besides the most cheering and glorious hopes. Relying on the promise and grace of God, they expect in due time to return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads. When all trials shall be past, and temptation and sin shall have come to an end; when the storms of life shall be over, then are they to rest together in the world where there is no more sin—no more separation. Before their Maker's throne they are to be the subjects of a union immensely more intimate, more endearing, more joyful than any ever known among mortals. My brethren, how precious, how cheering, how glorious that hope of the Christian, in which all this is embraced! What object is worthy of a moment's comparison with the future inheritance of those who are allowed to say, For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? How impressively does this view of the present condition and the prospects of saints show that they should all speak the same thing, that there should be no divisions among them! Have they now the same trials, the same supports and enjoyments? are they to spend eternity in perfect and blissful harmony?—then how ill does division and contention become them; how obvious that they should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.

Saints should maintain the harmony and mutual affection inculcated in our text, from regard to their own spiritual good, and the interests of the cause to which they are attached. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Let the members of the Savior's household be knit together in love; let them keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and how immensely must it contribute to their mutual edification and growth in grace. Let them maintain harmony of sentiment, let the law of kindness towards each other dwell in their hearts, let them in all things love as brethren, and how effectually must it contribute to their perfection in holiness and comfort. How much by these means may they do to alleviate their mutual burdens; how much to render them helpers of one another's joy. In this manner is the happiness of heaven in a measure brought down to earth, and the church below made to resemble the church above.

But not only does the temper which our text inculcates bring with it spiritual satisfaction and peace; it also contributes much to procure the influences of the Holy Spirit. This blessed agent delights to dwell in that religious community, the members of which all speak the same things, and suffer no divisions among them. They are prepared to cherish his operations. By them the power of sin is overcome, and their minds are led to holiness and to God. Contrast these things with what you may witness where an opposite spirit prevails —where diverse opinions respecting the doctrines of revelation are cherished, and these occasion debate, and debate produces strife, and this is marked by an unkind spirit, more solicitous for victory than for truth, and the community which ought to be bound together by cords of love, is arrayed in hostile parties. Can large measures of the renewing and sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit be expected under such circumstances? I will not presume to limit the power or the grace of Zion's

King. I know that the residue of the Spirit is with him; that his ways are above those of men, as the heavens are above the earth; that he can perform the most splendid works of mercy where creatures would least expect it; but I also know, that if he do vouchsafe the special tokens of his presence and love, under circumstances such as I have described, it is a departure from the ordinary mode of his dealings with men. How often, may we well believe, that the God of mercy has withheld the life-giving influences of his Spirit, or has withdrawn them, because his people have not been perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. In how many instances have they who love the Lord Jesus Christ, deprived themselves of blessings beyond all price, by not keeping the new commandment which he has given them. Doubtless, multitudes there are, who, from this cause, will be less holy and less happy to all eternity.

From the same cause, too, will multitudes fail of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and be forever excluded from the abodes of the blessed. If diversity of opinion, and the spirit of contention, which it so often produces, prevent the special operations of the divine Spirit, how fatal are they to the prosperity of that cause, for which the Savior died; the advancement of which secures the salvation of men and the glory of God. My hearers may complain, that I deal in mere common-place remark, when I assert, we can have no hope that this cause will be advanced, or the souls of men be saved, without special Divine influence. But though this truth is familiar and trite, is there not danger that it may be practically overlooked? We know full well that the Holy Ghost possesses almighty power; still it may escape our minds, that he is easily grieved; that even men while utterly unable to imitate his operations, can cause him to abandon forever an ungrateful people. Let this once be done, and where could be the hope, that ever another sinner among them would be renewed and saved? But if the people of God are liable to that which may be followed by consequences so deplorable, how ought they to guard their conduct; how should they fear and tremble in view of the responsibility which attends their doings. Are the effects of dissensions and jealousies among saints to be told in eternity in tears and groans, as the smoke of their torment, whom these dissensions are the means of destroying, ascendeth up forever and ever; then who that is a saint would not be most anxious to avoid them?

Our subject also demands consideration in another view. According to Jehovah's plan of administration, his designs of mercy towards this lost world are to be accomplished *by means.* We are not to expect his purposes of grace in behalf of men to be put in execution merely by his own direct efficiency. To this end the united efforts of his peculiar friends are indispensable. Every rational hope, that the cause of truth and righteousness will be sustained, that it will ultimately triumph, depends, under God, on the human instrumentality to be employed in its behalf. The efforts of creatures must indeed be approved of God, and all their success be from his blessing. Still, according to divine appointment, these efforts must be made, or nothing will be accomplished. In order that they may be made with encouragaging prospects, the people of God must cultivate harmony and mutual affection. To expect men to act in concert and with efficiency, unless substantially agreed in sentiment and feeling, is contrary to all experience. But who can doubt whether there is eminent need of such action in all the friends of God? The interests of the Redeemer's kingdom have always been subject to the hostility of powerful enemies seen and unseen. With them it is a fixed, leading object, to divide its friends, that thus they may destroy their

influence, and effect their own malignant designs. How forcible the reason thus furnished for all who love God to be one in sentiment, in feeling, in action. Let them be otherwise, and who can estimate the injury to those interests which they hold dear? Only by means of united zeal, and effort, and sacrifices, and prayers, can the enemies of the cross be subdued, the salvation of the gospel be diffused through the earth, and our lost race redeemed from the thraldom of sin.

The only effectual *means* of fully maintaining the harmony and mutual affection which are of so great importance, is *the increase of knowledge and piety in the people of God.* Ignorance has always been a fruitful source of error and contention. The man who has only superficial views of revealed truth, and is satisfied with such views, is peculiarly exposed to the influence of passion and prejudice. How can he arrive at correct conclusions, while thus unprepared to appreciate the considerations opposed to his present views? Within the limited range of his thoughts he finds nothing to evince the fallacy of his reasonings. But let his mind occupy a wider compass, let him give its proper weight to every thing which has a bearing on the subjects presented to his thoughts—he may then perhaps perceive that his conclusions are altogether fallacious. Ignorance occasions men not to reject only, but also to denounce and abhor the sentiments of others without examination. The follower of Christ who has never been accustomed to think deeply, but has adopted his religious opinions chiefly on the credit of others, is peculiarly liable to demand that all come to his standard. From this source what divisions, and angry disputes, and bitter denunciations have many times sprung, to the disgrace of the Christian name. Hence, party has been arrayed against party, and brother has called brother heretic, where perhaps more intellectual light was all which was needed to evince that both were in the wrong.

One thing, then, requisite to remove evils of this kind, is that thorough, accurate acquaintance with *the word of God*, which is acquired only by diligent attention to it, united with humble, earnest prayer. If we would have harmony and brotherly love, the teachers of religion must never go themselves, nor send their hearers to *human philosophy* to learn what they are to believe in relation to the great and mysterious subjects of religion. It is matter of everlasting gratitude to God, that he has sent down to this dark world a light to guide us in the ways of truth and peace. If we come at a full and correct understanding of the documents from which this light is reflected, then we may be sure that we know all that is here to be known respecting the subjects to which they relate. From the history of past ages, not less than from observation of our own times, is derived full and melancholy evidence, that all attempts *to be wise above what is written* are worse than useless. How fruitful a source of disputes and divisions have been attempts of this nature! Would we see the whole church of the same mind and of the same judgment, our first endeavor should be to awaken in all its members a resolution to labor, with diligence and prayer, for understanding the holy Scriptures. In this undertaking every individual should be willing to confine his inquiries within the limits which God has prescribed—always remembering that secret things belong unto the Lord our God, and only *those which are revealed* belong unto us and to our children.

But in order that the harmony and mutual affection, so much to be desired, may become universal in the church, not only must religious knowledge be increased; *the standard of piety* must also be elevated. Christians must become more spiritual; their affections must be more *holy*. They must pray more. They must have more faith and more

love. Their minds must be more exalted, more detached from the world; they must be more desirous of their Maker's glory, and less concerned for their own. Those disorderly, wicked passions which are the origin of divisions, contentions and numberless evils, must be subdued, and in their place must be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, which are the fruit of the Spirit, and against which there is no law. O when will saints be more like their divine Master and Lord, united in sentiment and feeling; kind and affectionate to one another, and disposed to co-operate in every good work! When will they exhibit the meekness and gentleness of Christ, sitting at his feet, receiving his instructions with implicit credence, divested of that pride which produces a wicked anxiety to be the greatest, which is an endless source of envy, jealousy and rivalship; which is most hateful to God and tormenting to its possessor? Then will the gospel appear in far greater simplicity and glory than before; the system of truth which it reveals, will be divested of many things which men have attached to it, heavenly influences continually descending, will make glad the city of our God, and earth will exhibit a resemblance of the light, and harmony, and peace, and joy which fill the world of glory.

Would you who are called saints do what is in your power to hasten the time when all this shall be experienced? then take heed that you imbibe and put in practice the principles and the spirit taught and enjoined in our text. Let your conduct towards one another be such that it may be said of you as heathen men said of Christ's disciples in primitive times, "See how these Christians love one another." Let all who love the Lord Jesus adopt this course—humbling themselves for past deficiency, and how blessed would be the consequences. The mouth of gainsayers would be put to silence; the church would appear in new beauty and glory; the influences of the divine Spirit would descend powerfully on the minds of men, and speedily would be verified the prediction, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the depths of the sea." My brethren, how much is such a consummation to be desired and to be sought? How closely connected is it with the glory of God and the dearest interests and hopes of the human family? Then with what solicitude should the followers of Christ cultivate that union with one another which leads to it; how anxiously avoid every thing of an opposite nature?

If I have rightly marked "the signs of the times," this is eminently a period, in which the friends of the Redeemer should all speak the same thing, and there should be no divisions among them, but they should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Many things now passing before our eyes indicate most plainly that the world is fast approaching some great moral revolution. The church is beginning to rouse from her slumbers; the systems of false religion, which have been so widely diffused are beginning to lose their influence over the minds of men. A spirit of free inquiry has gone abroad among the nations. Errors in opinion and in practice do likewise extensively prevail. Infidels of every name, and transgressors of every grade, are seen combining with determined hostility against the Savior—against his truth and his cause. How impressive the argument hence arising for unity of feeling and action in the friends of Christ? Will their love to Him who has purchased them with blood, allow them to waste in mutual contention the strength which they ought to array against the common enemy? In such a day as this, when the cause of truth is assailed from so many quarters, and the united efforts of its friends against the virulence of its enemies, are so much needed, will they suffer themselves to impair their

own influence by dissension, by mutual distrust and jealousy? Instead of coming, in the spirit of harmony and brotherly love, to the help of the Lord, shall they misrepresent, and disparage, and reproach one another? Shall they waste their time on questions of doubtful solution—points of a merely philosophical character, respecting which the Holy Ghost has not deigned to teach us?

The people of God in this country ought to consider these sentiments as applying to themselves, in all their force. To every enlightened friend of the Redeemer it must be most interesting and delightful to contemplate what God has done for the church in this western world, and the high destiny to which she seems to be called. To American Christians it is believed is assigned, in the purposes of heaven, much of the honor of that moral renovation of the human family, which is ere long to be experienced. A little less than a century since, the immortal Edwards employed his mighty mind, in attempting to show the probability that the millenium would commence in our country. Whether or not this opinion is well founded, there can be no doubt that Christians in America may have a share in the high honor of diffusing the blessings of that happy period throughout the globe. It is a momentous question—one which ought to come home to every heart that feels the love of God—whether their share in this honor shall be great or small. One or the other it will unquestionably be, very much in proportion as they are influenced by the instruction and the spirit of our text. Could I raise my feeble voice to a note which might be heard throughout the length and breadth of the land, I would urge on every saint, that love to all the household of faith, by which the Savior has taught us that his disciples shall be known; I would say to him, Brother, as you love the Savior, as you desire to see his glories spread around the world, and the souls of men redeemed from hell, take heed that, whenever you meet an individual bearing his image, by what name soever he may be called, you embrace him in the arms of Christian affection, and be ready to co-operate with him in every good work. Too long has the church crippled her own energies, and retarded her growth, by mutual dissension and the spirit of party. As the brightness of a more glorious day begins to dawn upon her, O let this spirit cease, and its place be occupied by that love which seeketh not her own.

That all who constitute the visible family of Christ, should at present be united in one denomination, is neither to be expected nor desired. This would be a wide departure from the natural result of that freedom of opinion, which so happily exists in our country. It surely can be no cause of surprise nor of grief, that among men of truly devout minds there should be diversities of opinion on unessential points of doctrine and practice. Nor is it to be lamented, that these diversities have led to the organization of the community of the faithful under different names. But at this day, so interesting, so auspicious to the best interests of man, and in this country, so favored of heaven, so richly furnished with means of blessing the whole human family, let none of these things produce dissension, distrust, or alienation among the people of God. This shall be our prayer. And as the chariot of salvation rolls onward, and its motion is more and more accelerated by the breath of the Spirit, we believe the time is fast drawing near, when Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; when there shall be one Lord, and his name one; and when in all God's holy mountain there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy. AMEN.

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SERMONS CLXIII & CLXIV.

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NATURE OF INTEMPERANCE IN EATING.

Jude 12—*Feeding themselves without fear.*

In no way has intemperance made so many conquests as by concealing its true character. Not long since, it was almost universally supposed that the habitual use of ardent spirit, in moderate quantity, was consistent with strict temperance. And even yet, multitudes hug the murderous delusion. A still greater number would regard it extravagant to say, what is undoubtedly true, that any use of this substance, except in sickness, is intemperance. For if excess of any kind constitute intemperance, is it not intemperance to introduce into the system, that which, in the least quantity, is injurious; and which is as really a poison, as arsenic?

Still more erroneous is public opinion respecting the nature of *intemperance in eating.* Though it be at this moment almost universally prevalent, and much more destructive of health, happiness, and life, than ardent spirit; yet so insensible are the community to its existence, that even the word intemperance has come to signify excess in drinking merely; as if no other kind of intemperance were deserving of notice. And multitudes even of the most conscientious, are daily guilty of gross excess in the use of food, without the slightest apprehension that they are infringing at all upon any of the rules of temperance. Like the abandoned deceivers mentioned by Jude, *they feed themselves without fear;* not, indeed, because they are destitute of religious principle, but because they have no distinct apprehensions of the nature of this kind of intemperance.

It is extremely desirable that definite and correct principles on this subject should take the place of those loose and inadequate views that now so generally prevail. For of what use is it to have all men approve of temperance, while nearly all are intemperate in practice? To call things by their right names, is a most important step in every attempt at

reformation. What a magical influence has it exerted in respect to ardent spirit, to have proved that it is poison; and that, therefore, its habitual, even though moderate use, is intemperance? True, it is not so easy to draw the line between temperance and excess in food, as in alcoholic drinks; because we cannot engrave *total abstinence* upon the former, as upon the latter. Still, let us not despair of being able to mark the limits of temperance in respect to food. For if God has commanded us to practice it, he has doubtless given us the means of ascertaining the precise nature of our duty.

I. *In the first place, it is intemperance to consume a greater quantity of food than is necessary to give the most perfect and permanent health, and the greatest amount of vigor to the body and the mind.*

This proposition will probably commend itself at once to every unprejudiced mind. For what appears to have been the principal design of Providence in furnishing us with organs of digestion?—What, but to furnish the body and the mind with the most perfect health and vigor? True, there is connected with the process no small degree of gratification; and hence some have foolishly presumed it was the intention of Providence that man should indulge his appetite beyond what mere health and strength demand, for the sake of the pleasure. But the real fact is, that this cannot be done without diminishing the pleasure. For all such extra gratification of the appetite deranges more or less those organs that are the seat of the pleasure; and hence, although the gratification may be for a moment heightened, it is in turn proportionably diminished. In other words, an appetite more or less artificial is thus created; and this is always liable to morbid obtuseness, as well as morbid acuteness, whilst a natural, unsophisticated appetite, affords uniform and permanent pleasure. It is a fair inference, therefore, that the amount of food, which nature alone demands for repairing her wastes and invigorating the bodily and intellectual powers, will afford a greater amount of unmixed gratification than a larger quantity.

This reasoning has been amply confirmed by the testimony of numbers in every age. For amid the general excess that has at all times prevailed, *individuals* have adopted the rule given above. Most of the ancient philosophers, particularly the Pythagoreans, were indebted in a great measure to their moderation in food and drink, for their health, serenity, and long life. Many of the early Christians lived long and happy, although in banishment, upon an allowance of but twelve ounces of bread a day, and only water for drink. In more modern times, individuals in every condition of life, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, clergymen and laymen, physicians and philosophers, have added their testimony to that of antiquity, in respect to the happy influence of strict temperance. There is no dissenting voice to the conclusion, that the nearer they have come in the quantity of their food to the amount requisite for the most

perfect bodily and mental health, the greater has been their enjoyment, even of the pleasures of the table. This will sound paradoxical in the ears of one addicted to excess. But he has only to make the experiment faithfully, to be prepared to add his testimony to that of others. Some, by imperfectly, and partially, and hesitatingly trying the experiment, have come to a different conclusion. But had they prosecuted it long enough to bring back their appetites, in any degree, to a natural state; long enough to have acquired a relish for the pleasures of temperance, their voices would have mingled in the praises of that system, which forbids the stomach to be called to any labor not necessary to health and strength.

Again: a larger quantity of food than the health and strength demand, will produce *a disproportionate exercise and development of the bodily and mental powers.* God has given to the human constitution a remarkable power of conforming itself to circumstances; and thus, of sustaining, with far less injury than might be anticipated, the vicissitudes to which it is exposed. Hence it is, that men of intemperate habits, in respect to food, drink, or employment, not unfrequently hold out beyond all expectation; and their cases excite in many minds a suspicion, that such habits are far less injurious than is generally represented. But how is it that the system is able thus to sustain itself amid these injurious influences? One method is, by the production of a disproportionate strength and developement in the organ that is most severely tasked, at the expense of the other organs; or, in the language of the apostle, *God hath tempered the body together—that the members should have the same care one for another.* This curious sympathy induces all the members to lend a portion of their strength to any one of their number, that has more labor to perform than the rest. The consequence is, that the organ thus assisted, will acquire an increase of ability for its appropriate work, while the *others* will be proportionably *weakened.* Thus, if we require the stomach to digest more food than health and strength demand, that organ will lay a tax upon its fellows, for the additional power requisite for the increased labor: and if the additional burden continue to be imposed, the stomach will acquire a permanent power of sustaining it, by proportionably *weakening the other organs.* A person has only to observe his feelings after a hearty meal, to have a fair illustration of this principle. He finds himself indisposed to effort; his senses become less acute; and a disposition to sleep succeeds; just because the muscles, the senses, and the brain, have suspended their activity, in order to lend assistance to the overloaded digestive organs. And not until the stomach is relieved by their aid, can they resume their own proper work. And since the operations of the mind are dependent on the state of the senses and the brain, it is obvious that the intellectual faculties must be injured by having their resources thus called off to help the overloaded stomach. Accordingly we

find, that most men, after a hearty meal, are almost entirely disqualified for vigorous mental application. And if, at such a time, either the muscles, the senses, or the mind are roused by extraordinary effort to labor, digestion is in a great measure suspended, and the whole system receives an injury.

Now to say nothing of the ultimate effect upon the health of this disproportionate exercise and developement of the different organs and powers, who can believe, that it does not mar the human character? For does not the perfection of that character consist in a just and proportionate cultivation and exhibition of all the bodily and mental powers? At least, can we believe that God gave to the human system this wonderful power of adapting itself to the exigencies of its condition, in order that the nobler faculties should be impoverished to give the digestive energies a predominance which neither health nor strength require? What is this but to make the higher part of our nature a slave to the inferior? to live in order to eat, instead of eating to live? We see how gross and debasing this principle is, when exhibited in the shameless glutton, whose whole bodily and mental energies are made the mere panders of his stomach. But if the foregoing reasoning be correct, I see not why the least addition to the quantity of food needful to health and strength, does not lay a tax to the amount of the excess, upon the organs and powers thus called upon to aid the stomach. Admit that a larger quantity of food may not at once impair the health perceptibly; yet it cannot be indulged in without diminishing the bodily energy, and intellectual clearness and strength. God never intended that such a sacrifice as this should be made to a bodily appetite. It is gross sin, therefore, to make it.

But not unfrequently the man whose diet is of the richest and most stimulating kind, and who follows no rule as to quantity but the demands of hunger, enjoys vigorous health, and a fullness and energy of muscle, unknown to the cautious observer of dietetic rules.

Here is exhibited another method by which the animal system adapts itself to peculiar circumstances. All the bodily organs may, indeed, be more fully developed in this way; *but not without shortening the duration of life.* The stimulus of rich food in large quantity, urges on all the powers of life with accelerated steps: but the effect will be to wear them out the sooner; and hence it is, that men of this description, whose constitutions seem capable for a while of resisting almost every thing injurious, whose frames are athletic, and whose countenances are flushed with health, fail at length so suddenly and so early. Can it be, that God intended man should thus prematurely exhaust his energies, when the only advantage would be, a short-lived vigor, which, even if more favorable to physical efforts, must ever be a clog to the mental operations? Is it not obviously a needless waste of those precious energies, with which the *human constitution* is endowed for sustaining itself in unavoidable and

trying exigencies? Is longevity a blessing of so little importance, as to be thus unnecessarily sacrificed?

The manner in which an excess of nourishment taken into the system operates to shorten life is generally but little known. The fact is, it prepares the constitution for the attacks of disease upon slight exposures to any morbid influences; such as inclement weather, or fatiguing labors of body or mind: and it weakens the power of resisting those attacks. When the digestive organs are called upon to perform extra labors, they cannot perform the work as thoroughly as when not overtasked; and consequently they cannot send the food into the system so perfectly prepared for nourishment, as they might do, with a less quantity. This is one source of disease. Again, the additional task demanded of these organs, requires a draft to be made upon that secret strength of the constitution, which is reserved for resisting disease and meeting other exigences. That elasticity of the system, by which rigid temperance enables it to repel the first onset of disease, is thus more or less weakened; and the foe easily fastens his talons in the victim. Nor can all the stimulants of the physician bring back, or create anew, the lost energies of temperance, to repel the invader. Multitudes in this way sink early into the grave, and are regarded by the community as the unfortunate victims of diseases that have pounced upon them like birds of prey; whereas, their intemperance has invited the fatal disorder and taken away the power of resisting it.

In extreme cases, all men see disease and death to be the consequence of excess. But what reason can be given, why any amount of food, not required by health and strength, will not operate in the same way, to induce disease and weaken the power of resistance? And if this be indeed true, why is it not intemperance to indulge the appetite beyond the demands of bodily and mental health?

Finally; if we take not this standard as to the quantity of our food, then we have left us no other guide, but appetite. For if you say that we are not bound to limit our amount of food by the actual requirement of the system, for health and strength, then I ask, how much more than this may we take? You will admit that there may be excess in eating, and that the devoted glutton is intemperate. But will you lay your finger on the precise point, between what the system demands, and the excesses of gluttony, to which we may indulge our appetites. You say, perhaps, that we should be temperate, but not excessively abstemious. But what do you mean by being temperate? If you cannot tell me how far my appetite may be indulged, then I say, I will indulge it to the extent of its calls; nor do I see how you can regard me as intemperate, even though I emulate the grossest gormand. For you say that I may indulge that appetite beyond what the strength and health of the system requires; and yet you give me no rule for determining the limits

of that indulgence. What guide have I then, but my appetite? And if I may follow this, how can you condemn the most voracious glutton, who certainly never indulges beyond the calls of appetite?

But is it any easier to determine how much food is necessary for the health and strength, than to ascertain the precise limits between moderate and immoderate indulgence? I admit that the balances will not in general settle this question: since there is no small difference among different constitutions, in the power of abstracting nourishment from the same amount of food; and there are also very various quantities of nourishment in equal weights of different sorts of food. But it is not very difficult to determine the amount of food demanded by nature, if we will but carefully attend to its effects on the system. "Any discomfort of body," says a distinguished physician, "any irritability or despondency of mind, succeeding food and drink, at the distance of an hour, a day, or even two or three days, may be regarded, (other evident causes being absent,) as a presumptive proof that the quantity has been too much, or the quality injurious."—"If a few hours after his dinner he feel a sense of distension in the stomach and bowels, or any of the symptoms of indigestion, which have been pointed out; if he feel a languor of body, or a cloudiness of the mind; if h ha ve a restless night; if he experience a depression of spirits, or irritability of temper next morning; his repast has been too much, or improper in kind, and he must reduce and simplify till he come to that quantity and quality of food and drink for dinner, which will produce little or no alteration in his feelings, whether of exhiliration immediately after dinner, or of discomfort some hours after this meal." These remarks, though having reference only to dinner, the principal meal of the day, will apply with the same force to every other repast; as will also the testimony of one, who, to the age of upwards of a hundred years, had experienced the happy effects of an attention to this rule. "My spirits," says he, "are not injured by what I eat; they are only revived and supported by it. I can, immediately on rising from the table, set myself to write or study, and never find that this application, though so hurtful to hearty feeders, does me any harm. And besides, I never find myself drowsy after dinner, as a great many do. The reason is, I feed so temperately as never to load my stomach, or oppress my nerves; so that I am always as light, active, and cheerful, after dinner as before."

In attempting to make an application of this rule, for determining the necessary quantity of food, it ought to be recollected that many in good health and of laborious habits in the open air, have found that about 20 ounces of solid nourishing food, have been an ample daily allowance; and that invalids, and those of sedentary habits, have needed only from 12 to 16 ounces. Let then persons of these characters, commence with about these quantities, and afterwards increase or diminish them *according to* their effects, as they have now been described. In this

way, they will ere long learn the amount which their constitutions need; and to this they must resolutely adhere, if they would avoid the guilt of intemperance, and escape that "blackness of darkness," which, in the context, is threatened against those who, knowing their duty, still persist in "*feeding themselves without fear.*"

SERMON CLXIV.

JUDE 12—FEEDING THEMSELVES WITHOUT FEAR.

II. *In pursuing the subject of the preceding discourse, I next remark, that it is intemperance to use food* OF SUCH A QUALITY, *as to injure the digestive organs, and oppress the intellectual and moral powers.*

No reasonable man will hesitate a moment to admit this proposition in the abstract. For to derange the digestive organs is to induce disease and death; and to oppress the intellectual and moral powers, is to pervert the object of our existence. And surely, if the use of any particular *quality* of food makes such havoc with our best interests, to employ it is sinful intemperance. Yet here too, the grand difficulty lies in the entire ignorance, or erroneous opinions of the great majority of respectable and Christian men, on the subject. Hence in respect to the quality, as well as quantity of food, "*they feed themselves without fear.*"

It is a well established principle among medical writers, that "the more simply life is supported, and the less stimulus we use, the better." What a sad comment on this principle does the practice of nearly all mankind present! In the great mass of the community, the *natural* appetite is so completely perverted, or rather destroyed, that all relish for *simple* food and drink is gone: nay, such nourishment is regarded as even unhealthy, and incapable of sustaining life and vigor. Although, for example, water is the most salubrious of all kinds of drink, and the only fluid that can answer all the purposes of drink, and, therefore, the best calculated for health and strength, yet few persons feel as if it were tolerable, without the admixture of something stimulating: and it really excites the surprise of most men, to be told of an individual, who drinks nothing but water, and is yet strong and healthy.

Milk is another substance, expressly designed by the Creator to answer every purpose of nourishment, with the least tax upon the digestive and assimilating organs. And accordingly it furnishes almost the only food in the early and most delicate stages of existence. But by the great majority of adults it is regarded with disgust; it disagrees with them. And the reason is, they have so long substituted hot and stimulating fluids, such as tea and coffee, wine and spirit, for this simple fluid, that

when the usual stimulus is abstracted, the stomach, like a jaded beast of burden, refuses to act. And thus the two substances, which the Creator provided expressly for fluid aliment, have, by habit, come to be regarded as altogether unfit for use, unless mixed with stimulating materials, never intended for food.

A like hurtful and unnatural change is produced upon another class of articles, which, in their simple state, God prepared for the principal support of man: I mean the different sorts of grain and roots, from which bread is prepared. It is a settled principle in dietetics, that food in a form rather coarse, is best adapted to the organs designed for its reception. Yet is it regarded as an object of the first importance, at the present day, to prepare all farinaceous articles in as concentrated a form as possible; to extract from the wheat, for example, only its finest and whitest portions. But this is only a commencement of the perverting process. For here cookery comes in, with its refinements, lays under contribution the four quarters of the globe for condiments, and employs the flour, only as a receptacle of all manner of indigestible aromatics, oils, and sweets; so that the cake and the pastry, in their countless varieties, which hence result, are as compound and unnatural, and I may add, as injurious to the system, as possible.

A no less injurious system of cookery is applied to the preparation of almost every other article of food. Not that cookery of a simple kind is unfriendly to health. On the contrary, when it merely softens, or dissolves the food, so as to assist the organs of digestion, it is eminently salutary. But when its chief object is to tempt the appetite, by compound and stimulating dishes, it deserves the reprobation of every Christian and patriot. But at the present day, how few are the Christians, or the patriots, who do not employ this very system in the preparation of their food, without even a suspicion that it is injurious! The various kinds of meat, which Providence permits man to use, in their simple state, how are they loaded with condiments and stuffings, and made to swim in gravies, and thus rendered pernicious to any but the strongest powers of digestion; and how must not only the bodily organs, but the noble powers of the soul also, suspend their operations, while the stomach is laboring and struggling to master the incongruous mixture! In short, how little of the food which is used by the higher classes of society, is not so compounded, and rendered indigestible by oils, aromatics, sweets, and acids, as to be quite disagreeable to the man, whose appetite has never been perverted by indulgence!

One fact in relation to invalids, exhibits still farther evidence, how erroneous are the prevalent opinions as to the quality of food. It is these very injurious mixtures, that cookery has invented, which the greater part of men will offer to the feeble, as best suited to their condition! They need, it is thought, these rich and nourishing dishes, to keep up their *rength; and the* invalid himself, also, is soon persuaded that they agree

with him best, because they gratify most his morbid appetite; forgetful, that it is the *digestion* of food, and not the eating of it, that sustains and invigorates the system; and that it may be as absurd to give cake, pastry, and stimulating meats, to the feeble, as it is to load the horse or the ox with a heavier burthen, because he is weak or fatigued.

The quality of food is greatly and even chemically different, at different temperatures, and at different periods after its preparation. And a perverted and morbid appetite often relishes it in that state when it is most unhealthy and oppressive. Hence it is, that the great mass of the community, unconscious of the injury they receive, must sip their tea and coffee almost at a boiling temperature; and hot rolls, hot cakes, hot bread, and melted butter, constitute no small part of their diet. The morbid feelings that follow some time after, are imputed to other causes; nor can even the invalid, in many cases, be made to believe that food, in such a state, and at such temperatures, is injurious.

But I have given enough—probably many will say, too many and too specific illustrations—of what I mean by that *quality* of food, which renders it injurious to the animal system, and destructive to the mind. I appeal to the highest medical authorities in proof that these illustrations are neither visionary nor overdrawn. And I appeal to the conscience of every Christian, whose case they describe, to ponder well, whether it be not criminal intemperance, thus to pamper a depraved appetite, at such an enormous expense?

III. *In the third place, to indulge in more than one dish or course at a meal, is intemperance.*

This assertion will doubtless be startling to many; because it aims a blow so directly at their practice. But let the principle be well understood and weighed, before it is rejected.

The first inquiry will be, what constitutes a single dish? It may strictly be defined, any simple article of food, cooked in such a manner as to be most conducive to health and strength. Or perhaps there would be no great objection to giving more latitude of definition, so as to include a mixture of different kinds of food and condiments, suitably made before eating, or when eating. It ought, however, to be remembered, that these compound dishes may be of such a quality, as to oppress the digestive organs and the intellect; and their use thus become real intemperance. But in practice, there will be little difficulty in distinguishing between different dishes. At every meal, there is commonly some principal article of food, with its proper accompaniments, calculated to furnish a substantial repast. This is to be regarded as *one dish;* and when one course of meat succeeds another, or the pudding succeeds the meat, or the cake and pastry follows the whole, there is what we mean by *variety of dishes.* Now, I contend, that the use of more than one of these at a single meal, is intemperance.

In the first place, more than one dish is *unnecessary* for health, strength, or enjoyment.

Nearly every kind of food, that is abundant and widely diffused, whether vegetable or animal, contains all those elementary principles that are essential to nourish the system. For although nitrogen is wanting in most vegetables, yet the organs of nutrition appear to possess the means of obtaining this principle from other sources, when it does not exist in the food. Why then is more than one sort of food necessary *at the same meal*, to secure health and strength? For even if different kinds be requisite for a full development of the bodily organs, the object can be most completely accomplished, by using these various kinds at *different meals*. Indeed, most dishes, as modern cookery prepares them, contain not a little variety, abundantly sufficient to make up for any apprehended deficiency of a particular kind, on nutritive principles.

As to the comparative *enjoyment* in eating of one dish, or many dishes, experience is the only decisive test. And I hesitate not to say, that every one, who fairly makes the experiment, will prefer decidedly the single dish. For though a succession of courses, temptingly prepared, may produce a keen relish for the various dishes, yet, as is the case with every natural pleasure which is heightened by artificial excitement, the subsequent langor, stupidity, and nervousness, are an immense drawback upon the enjoyment. There is also an irregularity in the appetite of him who indulges in variety of dishes, which the man rarely experiences, who is contented with one. This single simple dish, always relishes; affording not indeed ecstatic pleasure, but uniform and real enjoyment: so that in the end, the amount exceeds that of the man who gratifies the cravings of a morbid appetite. To those who view this conclusion as erroneous, I have only to say, make the trial for some time, and you will be better able to judge of the matter than you now are.

Secondly, a variety of dishes at the same meal, oppresses the digestive organs; and by consequence, all the corporeal and intellectual powers. To use different articles of food in the stomach—except so far as a simple and healthy system of cookery requires—increases the difficulty of digestion, inasmuch as the solution of a compound is more difficult than that of a simple. For although digestion be not merely a solution, it is a solution; and as different substances are dissolved with various degrees of facility in the chemist's laboratory, so it is in this laboratory of the body. Hence physicians in every age, have testified to the injurious commotion produced in the stomach by an incongruous mixture. And that organ does not suffer without a deep sympathetic affection of all the related parts; (and what part in the system is not related?) hence the uneasiness and stupor that follows the feast: and hence too, the premature decay of him, who indulges in variety at the table. For in proportion as the organs are compelled to increase their labors, to master the heteroge-

neous mixture, which the free liver imposes upon them, will their energies be exhausted.

Finally, a variety of dishes at one meal, presents an almost certain temptation to excess in the quanity of food. Why do men wish for more than one substantial course of food at a meal? Just because they have eaten enough of the first dish—that is, as much as natural appetite requires; and the second dish creates a new and artificial appetite. And when this begins to flag, it is renewed by the excitement of a third dish; and thus is this stimulating system carried on, through a succession of courses, until abused nature can no longer be roused.

If this be a true account of the matter, where is the man of ordinary resolution that can resist the temptation to excess in his quantity of food, in the midst of the variety of enticing dishes that he meets at almost every table? Excess! what is it but excess, to indulge in a second dish, after one has eaten *enough*, of the first? It is, indeed, this variety of dishes, more than every thing else, that has deluged society with intemperance in respect to food; and substituted, in the place of natural appetite, an artificial, inordinate, capricious craving for the thousand most compound and most unhealthy mixtures of modern cookery. And yet, so insidiously has this monstrous abuse of the gifts of God crept in, that even the devoted Christian can daily spread his table with a host of these needless and expensive varieties of food, and indulge in them to repletion, without even a suspicion that he is as really breaking down prematurely his constitution of body, and besotting his mind, as the reeling drunkard in the streets. And this wretched delusion will continue, until men learn to make out their repast from a single dish. But the adoption of this principle would be almost as effectual, for securing temperance in respect to food, as total abstinence is, in respect to ardent spirit.

IV. *A man may be intemperate by the time and manner of partaking of his food.*

Even if he adhere to the strict rules of temperance as to quantity, quality, and variety, he may take the allotted portion at such times, or in such a manner, as to oppress the stomach, and thus stupify the mind: and to do this when it can be avoided, is obviously intemperance, as really as to do the same injury by an excessive quantity; or a deleterious quality, or variety. He may have no regular times for his meals; and at one period impose a new task upon the digestive organs before the previous one is completed; and at another, delay so long to satisfy the demands of nature, that more than human strength will be requisite to resist its cravings for an inordinate quantity.

Some delay their principal meal till night; and thus put the digestive organs to their severest work, when, with the rest of the body, they need repose. The immediate effects are, disturbed sleep and despondency, irritability and indisposition to mental effort in the morning: and the ultimate result is premature failure, both of body and mind.

Others, particularly invalids, acquire the injurious habit of interrupting the process of digestion, by luncheons between meals; because perhaps they have a sense of faintness, which they mistake for hunger; which receives a present relief, though an ultimate aggravation from food.

That portion of the community in every country, who have departed the least from nature in their modes of living, and who enjoy the most vigorous health, are in the habit of taking their principal meal about the middle of the day; and two other repasts, about six hours before and after noon. Generally about that space of time is demanded by the stomach to perform its task and to enjoy a little rest preparatory to resuming its work. Intervening luncheons and collations, not only retard the regular operations of that organ, but deprive it of all opportunity of resting; and thus as surely wear it out early, as premature prostration will follow the incessant occupation of any other organ.

Three meals per day seem then to be the greatest number that can be indulged in without a violation of the laws of health. And that monstrous perversion of nature, now so common, especially in cities, by which breakfast takes the place of dinner, dinner that of supper, and supper that of sleep, can be regarded only as intemperance of the most open and unblushing character. God shows how he views it, by visiting those guilty of it, with bodily and mental imbecility, and by sending them to a premature grave.

The sedentary and the feeble violate the rules of health, by indulging in the use of meat two or three times each day. So stimulating a diet may perhaps be borne, for a considerable time, by the hardy laborer; but it goads on with feverish violence the powers of the invalid and the sedentary: and though the hectic glow thus produced, may give them the impression that the practice is salutary, early and fatal prostration is the common and painful result.

Great bodily exertion is apt to give much increase to the appetite: and hence do most men, in such cases, and especially when journeying, give a full rein to appetite: whereas the stomach is then in an unfavorable state for grappling even with its ordinary task. For it needs rest, like the other parts of the system. Multitudes are rewarded for thus violating a law of their constitution, by the morbid feelings which intemperance in food always brings in its train; and the invalid's journey for health, often proves on this account, but the means of aggravating his complaints.

Not a few are in the habit of indulging in as full and stimulating a diet during the debilitating months of the spring and summer, as when the constitution is braced by the cold of winter; and as the effects of this species of intemperance, chronic diseases gradually creep on, or autumnal disorders prostrate the system at once.

Providence has given to man, as well as other animals, most conve-

nlent instruments for the thorough mastication of food ; and all animals, except man, make thorough use of the teeth for this purpose. The ravenous, artificial appetite which man acquires, does not allow him to wait for the performance of this preliminary to digestion ; and he thus imposes a double task upon the stomach. Of what avail will it be to be rigidly abstemious in the quantity, quality, and variety of our food, if we thus require of one organ, the labor which appropriately belongs to another ?

The strongly excited state of mind, under which many partake of their food, powerfully contributes to their hurried manner of crowding it, without mastication, into the stomach. And this mental excitement is doubly injurious, by weakening the power of the digestive organs, on the principle already explained, that when any one part of the system is severely tasked, the other parts will suspend their functions in a degree, that they may lend it a sort of sympathetic assistance.

Another mode in which men ignorantly practice intemperance in eating, is by receiving food when they have no appetite. Hunger is the signal by which nature indicates her need of food ; and if no such signal be given, she will not be ready, by her appropriate organs, to convert the food which we crowd upon her—however rich and stimulating—into nourishment. But we are apt to mistake an uneasy sensation of the stomach for real hunger; and then we inevitably oppress the system, if we impose food upon that organ.

Such are the principal modes in which man may be guilty of intemperance in diet. In conclusion, I make a single inference, viz.

That intemperance in eating is alarmingly prevalent.

Those who admit the correctness of my description of what constitutes this kind of intemperance, will need no argument to establish the inference. For it will force itself upon their notice among all classes of society, and almost every time that food is taken. Nor is the intemperance of so slight a character as to deserve little notice, or reprehension. It meets us everywhere in giant bulk and grossness ; although an unknown god to the great mass of its votaries. It is reputable to be intemperate ; it is considered no blot on the Christian character. Nay, to be temperate is thought by many of the best of men, to be injuriously abstemious, or meanly parsimonious. The eyes of men in every age, and in almost every country, have been most deeply blinded on this subject ; so that the great mass of the population, even of the wise and the good, have conscientiously encouraged intemperance, by their example and influence. But in no period of the world has this intemperance probably prevailed so universally, among all who are not too poor to obtain the means, as at the present. The community begin to be aware of the true nature and effects of excess in drinking ; but very few have any suspicion, that, *in the aggregate, greater evils result from excess in eating.*

"It has been thought," says Dr. Fothergill, of London, "that more people suffer by hard drinking than immoderate eating; but my observation leads me to take the opposite side."

"In general," says Dr. Franklin, "mankind, since the improvement of cookery, eat about twice as much as nature requires."

"Intemperance of some kind," says Lord Bacon, "destroys the bulk of mankind."

"In polished nations," says Sir John Sinclair, "men commonly eat at least double the quantity of food necessary, and often four or five times more than they ought to do."

"It may with truth be asserted," says a distinguished German physician, "that the greater part of mankind eat more than is necessary; and by being crammed and over-fed in infancy, we are deprived of that natural sensation which ought to tell us when we have enough."

"All our most eminent physicians agree in this one point," says an American physician, "that as a people we eat far too much hearty food." "Almost every man, woman and child in our country," says another of our medical writers, "habitually eats and drinks twice as much every day, on a moderate estimate, as is necessary."

Do these opinions seem extravagant? Let us apply the first rule as to diet, given in these discourses, to the general practice of mankind. Where is the man, who will testify that he feels no "languor of body, no cloudiness of mind," after dinner? Who can say with Cornaro, "I can immediately on rising from the table, set myself to write or study—and I never find myself drowsy after dinner as a great many do"? Let the laboring man for one day, weigh out twenty ounces of solid food, and the sedentary and literary man sixteen ounces, and compare these quantities with their usual allowance; and they will see the reason of their bodily and mental torpor. Or rather, they will see that they are in the habit of eating two or three times more than the average amount, which a great variety of men, in different situations and occupations, have found abundantly sufficient for health and strength.

Let the dietetic habits of the community be tested by the second rule; or that which relates to the *quality* of food. Who is satisfied with unmixed water, the most healthy of all fluids, for drink? How are sea and land compassed to provide wines, ale, acids, alkalies, aromatics, and various vegetable principles, to impart stimulating properties to this simple beverage? although all these additions—however agreeable to the palate—serve only to make more labor for the physical organs; because these ingredients must all be separated from the water again, before that fluid can be converted into nourishment. Who does not feel himself reduced to an intolerable degree of abstemiousness, if compelled to make out even a single meal, from what is called coarse food, cooked in a simple manner, with the addition of no stimulus, except that one condiment, which all *God nature seems* to crave—common salt? If no rich gravies and

sauces excite the appetite, if no compound pastry, cake, or, other article of dessert, appear upon the table, how disappointed and churlish the guests? And all this, not because such simple food is not abundantly sufficient for health, strength, and happiness; but because the appetite is perverted, and excess has become a habit.

Apply the third rule, or that relating to variety in food, to the habits of living among all classes in this land; and you will see how wide spread is intemperance. For not even the poorest among us are content with a single dish, however excellent: and few in this country are so poor as not to have the means of gratifying their palate. As you ascend through the different classes of society, on the pecuniary scale, the evil rises in magnitude, until you reach the formal city feast. The really temperate man, however, will find it frightful enough among the middle classes in society. The sober industrious farmer, or mechanic, who is complaining grievously of the difficulty of obtaining a subsistence, will yet look upon you as beside yourself, if you suggest to him that he might profitably substitute a single dish, for the two, three, or four that are usually on his board. Even the man of letters will smile incredulous, when you tell him that a single dish would give him far greater ability for intellectual labor, than a succession of courses. And the conscientious devoted Christian, nay the holy minister of the meek and lowly Jesus, would sooner part with a right hand, or a right eye, than the unnecessary and injurious second and third courses and desserts, that now often make his afternoons seasons of yawning, sleeping, and stupidity, instead of cheerfulness and vigorous effort.

Our boarding houses and hotels furnish another exhibition of the demand in the community for variety. That establishment would instantly be abandoned, which should spread a table on the true principles of temperance; and generally an eating house is regarded as excellent, in proportion to the variety and richness of the food which it furnishes.

The dietetic excesses of social visits, all over the land, present another form of this crying evil. To crowd upon our friends, as is done every where, a great variety of the richest and most indigestible kinds of food and fruit, is a monstrous perversion of the design of social entertainments: turns them into mere scenes of banqueting; unfits those invited for profitable intercourse; excites a spirit of unholy emulation to excel in the splendor and variety of entertainments, and induces multitudes to live beyond their income. And these effects, to say nothing of injured health, are abundantly realized in the community. Social visits, instead of "the feast of reason and the flow of *soul*," are becoming epicurean revels: and instead of promoting health, and giving new vigor for labors of body and mind, they are followed by the prostration of both. Is it not astonishing that Christians should ever tolerate such glaring abuse of a most beneficial custom, without feeling a single reproof of conscience! Can they, in this day of light, continue to do it ignorantly?

The fourth rule as to diet, which we have considered, if compared with prevailing customs, would compel us to write intemperance on almost every door, especially in our cities and large towns. How many have so changed the hours of eating, as to impose the principal task upon the stomach in the evening, when it ought to be at rest! How many are not content with even three meals per day; but with luncheons and collations make out four or five, and the last one often late at night! What havoc of flesh do we witness among the sedentary and even invalids; not once merely, but twice, or even thrice a day; and that too, during the heats of summer! With what canine fury do we see multitudes seize their food, and hurry it into the stomach half masticated, as if the teeth were intended only for seizing, and not at all for grinding the food! "Eating too fast," says a medical traveler, "may be set down as one of our national peculiarities, as every foreigner on first coming among us is forcibly struck with the rapid manner in which we devour our food."

Thus widely, thus universally, I had almost said, does intemperance in food prevail: thus deep are the delusions by which even the best of men are held in this ignominious bondage. What hope, then, that the feeble note of remonstrance which I raise, will be heeded by the cold ear of unbelief, amid the deafening clamors of appetite! What hope that such a public opinion against this species of intemperance can ever be formed, as is now spreading its healthful current over the land, and putting out the wild fire which ardent spirit has kindled! True the prospect is dark; but a few beams of hope penetrate the gloom. The great change that has taken place in respect to ardent spirit, among Christians and patriots, may be regarded as the precursor of a similar change in respect to food. For to produce it, there needs only an application to diet, of the same sober and rational principles which have convinced so many that total abstinence from ardent spirit is a duty. And men, who have a high sense of moral obligation, will make this application, so soon as they see their inconsistency, and hear the remonstrances of conscience. Indeed, not a few, here and there, are already making the application, and have commenced earnestly and successfully the glorious and happy reformation. But, after all, faint indeed would be the prospect of its advancement, did we believe that human strength and resolution only would be employed. Yet may we confidently trust, that this is a cause which lies near the heart *of Him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* He, therefore, will make it triumphant. For we may rest assured, that his designs respecting human happiness and millenial glory can never be accomplished, TILL UNIVERSAL TEMPERANCE PREVAIL.

[*The subject to be continued.*]

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SERMON CLXV.

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THE MURDER OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER; OR THE DOWNWARD COURSE OF SIN.

Mark vi. 26—28. *And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes who sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.*

Thus ended the life, labors and sufferings of John the Baptist. He was born six months before our blessed Lord, and, according to the common computation, was executed about a year before him. He was eminently distinguished for his piety, his talents and his office. "Filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb," he drank neither wine nor strong drink, but spent his life in the most ardent and exemplary discharge of duty. Raised up of God to be a great public reformer, in an age of pride and profligacy, he was furnished with the most bold and commanding talents. Appointed from heaven to be the harbinger of the Messiah, and to call the attention of the nation to his advent, he sustained an office superior to that of all preceding prophets. "For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

He lived an example of humble boldness in the ministry of the truth, and died a martyr to his unflinching fidelity. He fell a victim to a merciless resentment which his official duty had excited.

It appears from the text, that John was in *prison*, when he was beheaded. In a preceding verse we learn how he came there: "For Herod himself had laid hold upon John and bound him in prison."

Prisons, though designed for the confinement of malefactors and the prevention of crime, have often been made, by perversion, the abode of the excellent of the earth—the dwelling place of those of whom the world was not worthy.

It is not certain how long John had been in prison; but it is generally supposed to have been about a year and a half. His confinement closed his public labors and his extensive usefulness, in the prime of life; and thus a burning and shining light was extinguished in the moral heavens, by a despot, who loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil.

But what was the cause of John's imprisonment? Did Herod find in him any crime, worthy of this punishment? The exercise of the civil arm is always a public benefit, when, according to the ordinance of God, it is made a terror to evil doers. But in the case before us it was far otherwise. Herod "knew that John was a just man and an holy." He had witnessed his unexceptionable life; his unimpeachable sanctity. He knew that he was engaged in a righteous cause, and had reformed the manners and lives of many. Nay, he himself had heard him preach, and was for a season affected favorably, and in a manner reformed, by his ministry. His own experience was a remarkable testimony in John's favor. "When he heard him," says the sacred historian, "he did many things, and heard him gladly."

These were Herod's best days. There was then hope in his case. However bad a man may be, we cannot wholly give him up for lost, so long as he attends on the preaching of the word, and especially if the word preached has any effect on his conscience, and holds any restraints on his life. Had Herod continued to hear John, and to regard the doctrines that he taught, he might, humanly speaking, have been led to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and become a happy follower of the Redeemer. But ah! his attention was diverted;

and his serious impressions—a thing by no means uncommon—were soon effaced. The love of sinful indulgence gained the ascendancy in his heart. His sentiments were changed. And, on pretence of being insulted by an instance of the Baptist's fidelity in telling him the truth, he is now ready to persecute with imprisonment and death the man of God, whom he formerly heard with reverence and pleasure.

It is an old remark, often confirmed by observation, that when a sinner becomes attentive to the word preached, he must soon quarrel either with himself or with the faithful minister. It sometimes happens, as in the present instance, that he is first displeased with himself, and afterwards with the preacher; and when this occurs, the resentment in the latter case is often lasting, and sometimes utterly irreconcilable. How precarious, I had almost said, how *hopeless* is the condition of those, who "for a season heard the word gladly, and did many things"—whose consciences were awakened—whose minds were enlightened—whose hearts were impressed—whose feelings were excited—whose suppliant souls were bowed before the mercy-seat—and whose doings towards God and men were reformed; but who have since relapsed into their former state of fancied security, lost their religious interest, become neglecters of the word, haters of those from whom they were once glad to hear it, and are now more closely wedded to the world, if not to vice, than ever before. How fearfully improbable is the recovery of such from the snare of the devil! Beware, ye whom the admonition may concern, beware of this dangerous, perhaps fatal, relapse. The case is nearly assimilated to that of those, who, an apostle declares, "are nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Herod's character, excepting the temporary and partial reform under the ministry of John, appears to have been generally wicked and profligate. John, as the minister of God, and doubtless sincerely desirous of Herod's welfare, and probably encouraged by the attention he had received from him, was faithful and bold enough to "*reprove him for all the evils which he did.*" As there can be no genuine repentance without the knowledge of sin, it surely becomes the minister of religion to endeavor to set every man's iniquity fully before him, and that too with the directness and faithfulness of the prophet to the king of Israel, "*Thou art the man.*" Some may, indeed, be angry; but shall the man of God, in fear of that, be unfaithful?

But there was one thing in the life of Herod, on the sinfulness of which

John appears to have been specially explicit; and here it was that he principally gave offence. It was probably Herod's easily besetting sin, and therefore the most difficult to be abandoned. A man may bear to be reproved for a sin that is only occasional, or somewhat accidental; for a sin, if I may so say, which is not natural to him, or is not characteristic of him; but if you speak of his bosom, beloved, cherished sin—the particular sin of his constitution—the sin to which he is naturally most prone, and which holds dominion over him, he may deem you guilty of an unpardonable misdemeanor. You have touched him where he is most sensitive. Your wounds are as arrows in his most vulnerable part. Thus it was with Herod when John said to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." He might perhaps have borne the reproof of all his other sins, and even been willing to break them off. But *this* could not be given up. Nay, it might not be mentioned with impunity, even by the minister of God.

The case was this—Herod, though married to the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king, had formed an attachment to Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and consequently divorced his own wife, and married her. This connection was contrary to the law of God, both because Philip, the husband of Herodias, was still living, and because Herodias, by marriage with Philip, was so nearly related to Herod.

It is highly important to the peace of families and to the purity of society, that the laws of God regulating marriage, be preserved inviolate. And the observance of these laws, as well as of all divine institutions, is more especially incumbent on those whose office and rank give influence to their example. Herod, therefore, occupying the throne of state, was the more justly obnoxious to reproof for his transgression; and John had the intrepidity, in the discharge of ministerial duty, to tell him so.

The offence, according to the divine law, was two-fold: It consisted of adultery and of incest; of the former, inasmuch as Herodias' husband was living; of the latter, as she was by marriage Herod's sister.

This rare, though commendable instance of fidelity, in telling a chief magistrate his sins, incurred relentless persecution. Not only Herod was displeased, but the wrath of Herodias was enkindled. She appears to have been a woman of more depraved character than even Herod. Possessed of vindictive passions, and lost to all the finer feelings so essential to female loveliness, and considering herself impeached by the reproof ad-

ministered to Herod, and fearing perhaps, that she might lose the man of her criminal attachment, she aimed her resentment at the speedy destruction of John. His imprisonment, however, was all she could at first effect. For Herod, by whom only she could accomplish her purpose, knew that the people reverenced John as a prophet, and consequently might, if he put him to death, make an insurrection. "When he would have put him to death, (says Matthew,) he *feared the multitude*, because they counted him as a prophet."

But though the king and the queen were restrained from venting their rage at once upon the holy minister; yet Herodias, this second Jezabel, still meditated his destruction. For eighteen long months, while he was suffering in chains and in prison, she cherished the spirit of revenge, in her bosom. We should have thought, that a *woman's* thirst of vengeance might have been sated, in the course of this period, with the protracted sufferings of the object of her displeasure. But what do I say? The spirit of a woman was not in her. The spirit of the devil had usurped its place. Women, though generally more amiable than men, and much less frequently abandoned to vice, yet, when abandoned, sometimes exhibit the deepest and deadliest depravity.

An opportunity at length occurred, for Herodias to gratify her malice. Herod, on his birth-day, had made a sumptuous entertainment, and assembled "his lords, high captains and chief estates of Galilee."

One of the amusements for the entertainment of the king and his courtiers, in this season of festivity, was *dancing*. And Salome, the daughter of Herodias and Philip, "came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him." So infatuated was the king with her movements, and probably with wine too, that "he said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore unto her, whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

His promise and oath were in the highest degree rash and wicked, as the sequel will show. Elated with the magnificence of the offer, and with such a compliment to her worthless accomplishment, Salome withdrew to consult her mother, as to the request she should make. The God of nature has implanted the principle that directs a child to the parent for counsel and guidance; and happy are those whose parents avail themselves of this principle to guide them in the ways of wisdom. But more pitiable than orphanage, is the condition of those whom parents encourage in wickedness. What a dread account will those meet at the tribu-

nal of God, who, by precept or example, destroy the souls of their offspring!

Herodias, it seems, had given her daughter the fashionable accomplishment of dancing. The choice she will now encourage her to make, in reference to the king's promise, will enable us to judge further of her education. Many objects are before them for selection. Any thing may be demanded, even to the half of the kingdom. And, behold, after mutual counsel between the mother and her daughter, the favorite object is selected. "Give me the head of John the Baptist in a charger." Humanity—nay, I had almost said, barbarity itself, is shocked at the horrid request! But of what atrocity is not human nature capable! This exhibition of depravity shocks us the more, because it occurs in a female—a female too in the bloom of beauty—of youth. With what rapid progress must she have pursued the path of vice to arrive at such a proficiency! But Salome evinced that she was the natural daughter of her profligate mother, born and bred in her likeness.

Herodias was pleased with thus finding an opportunity of accomplishing her malignant purpose on the faithful minister.

The account given of this woman and her daughter is so humiliating to their sex, and so degrading to human nature, that we anxiously look round for something in the case that may soften the dark shades of the picture. But nothing of the kind can be found. There is no alleviating circumstance. Had John, by any undue severity, or indiscretion, given even a pretext for impeachment, there would have been some apology for the persecution. But he had only said, affectionately and honestly, yet clearly and distinctly, what he could not forbear to say, without official connivance at iniquity in high places; and there was not even the form of a charge against him. Had the demand for his murder proceeded from the paroxysm or phrenzy of sudden and momentary rage, it were better. But no; the fiendlike passion for many a long month has brooded in the dark recesses of a guilty bosom, holding its steady and determined inquisition for blood; and now, when the opportunity occurs, can unblushingly come forth and make the demand, on an occasion of social entertainment, even in the presence of all the nobility of the kingdom! Ah! if there was any virtue; if there was any humanity; if there was any sense of propriety, in the court of Herod, we cannot envy him the honor that his ill-gotten wife and her dancing daughter gained him on this occasion. It has often been remarked that unlawful marriages are seldom prosperous; that they are generally followed by the visible frowns of heaven. She,

whom Herod unlawfully married, and unlawfully retained, was the occasion of more serious evil to him than the loss of his crown. But what was the success of Salome's request for the head of the Baptist? And how was Herod affected by it? Ah! we cannot but wonder that the whole palace was not filled with indignation at the monstrous proposal. The bare tolerance for a moment of such a request, and that from a female, in whom we expect to find every thing that is mild, benevolent, and amiable, argues the general depravity of the age and the gross profligacy of the court. "*The king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes who sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother!*"

Such was the closing scene of this brutal tragedy. Of the dreadful end of Herod and some of his associates in crime, we have not time to speak. Before closing this discourse, however, permit me to suggest several practical reflections.

1. Learn from the case of Herod, THE DANGER OF INDULGING IN ANY KNOWN SIN, either of omission or commission. We often meet with individuals whose manner of life has been much reformed under the preaching of the word, but to whom we are still constrained to say, as our Lord did to the young man in the gospel, "One thing thou lackest." There is some one beloved sin that they will not forsake, or some one indispensable duty that they will not perform. "The kingdom of God has come nigh unto them;" but there is one barrier in the way; and this may as effectually exclude them as though Alpine obstructions interposed. They are still on the territory of the god of this world. Iniquity still has dominion over them; and "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Let me ask such, Is it wise—is it not madness—to forego, valuntarily to forego, the ineffable, the everlasting joys of heaven, for the momentary pleasure of a single sin? You have perhaps wondered at the folly of Esau, who for one morsal of meat sold his birthright. But if you sell your soul for a sordid gratification, or neglect its mighty interests, from that fear of man which springs from pride, where is your superior wisdom?

2. This portion of sacred history admonishes parents and children to check the first rising of bad passion. It not only secretly corrodes the bosom where it dwells, but often leads to deeds of horror. Learn, then,

nobly to suppress at once the least angry or resentful feeling. Subdue the monster in its infancy, or you may be unable to master it in the maturity of its growth. Take lessons from the example of the Savior's meekness; and when you have failed in the imitation, go to his cross for pardon, and strength for time to come.

Finally, let parents learn, from the case of Salome, to *regard the moral and religious education of their children* as infinitely more important than any *vain and fashionable accomplishments.* Let them remember that their children have souls—that they are rational, accountable, and immortal beings; and let them educate them accordingly. Judging from the manner in which many train up their offspring, we might suppose that they had adopted the doctrine of the Sadducees, that "there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit;" that death terminates the existence of man forever; and that, therefore, *he* makes the wisest improvement of life, who devotes it to the pleasures of the world, and says, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

But, what! some will tartly reply, Would you debar them from every innocent amusement! Would you have them assume the gravity of age, and spend the bloom and buoyancy of youth in mopish melancholy? We wish nothing unreasonable. We would not deprive them of a single gratification which God allows, and which is not inconsistent with a greater good. We would debar them from no amusement which does not interfere with their duty to God, and their highest happiness. Yet we would not consent to their conformity to a "world lying in wickedness." We would not consent to their going "with a multitude to do evil." We would not consent to their "walking in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes;" inasmuch as "for all these things God would bring them into judgment." We would charge them rather "to seek *first* the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof,"—to remember that the Savior says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me *early* shall find me." If they are the creatures of God, ought they not to serve him? If they may die while young, what duty or interest calls more imperatively, than that they should "remember their Creator in the days of their youth," and prepare to meet him? What is more reasonable than that they should fly from the fire which shall never be quenched? that they should secure, while it is possible, "an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" Can a parent endure the thought of his children being hurried from their youthful frivolities and worldly pleasures, to the tribunal of God, without having ever seriously thought on the subject? Why then encourage them to go to schools of

mere fashionable accomplishment, or to scenes of gaiety and dissipation? Are not such scenes, at least, a useless waste of time? Do they not banish serious thought? Do they not lead to forgetfulness of God? Do they not nourish feelings and desires unbecoming candidates for eternity? Your children look to you for counsel, they imitate your example, they revere your authority. How solemn, then, your responsibility! O, then, let your counsel, your example, your authority—in a word—your whole influence upon them be such, that when you see them in the dying struggle, they may not upbraid you; and when you meet them at the bar of God, they may not condemn you.—AMEN.

SERMON CLXVI.

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THE NATURE AND EFFICACY OF TRUE PRAYER.

MATTHEW xxi. 22.—*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

PRAYER is a subject of vital importance to the souls of men, and one that is exciting at the present day a deep interest in the church of God. Within a few years past a more than ordinary spirit of inquiry has been awakened in many parts of Christendom, revivals of religion have been greatly increased both in number and power, and a multitude of cases have occurred in which prayer was very manifestly answered. And this subject will doubtless yet gain a much stronger hold on the church, as God shall extend her borders, and begin to throw upon the world the light of millenial day.

I propose to show, IN WHAT TRUE PRAYER TO GOD CONSISTS; and WHY WE MAY EXPECT IT TO BE ANSWERED.

I. IN WHAT DOES TRUE PRAYER CONSIST?

In order to avoid erroneous conclusions, a more extended view of what constitutes acceptable prayer must be taken, than some at first might suppose. It is no small matter for such poor, guilty, imperfect creatures as we are, so to approach the infinite God, as to obtain for ourselves and others the richest blessings immortal souls can enjoy.

1. True prayer presupposes *obedience to the known will of God.* "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." In vain shall we look for an answer, if we are habitually indulging in known sin, and endeavoring to promote by our prayers and efforts any sinister object, and not the glory of God. The language of the apostle John is equally decisive. "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." And our Savior has added, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Here is presented in substance the requisite preparatory character. We must love and serve God, acquiesce in his government, seek his glory, rely on his promises, and faithfully use all the means adapted, in the divine plan, to bring sinners to a saving knowledge of the truth.

2. It is indispensable to efficacious prayer, *that the blessings for which we ask be agreeable to the revealed will of God.*—"This is the confidence that we have in him," saith an apostle, "that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." Now, what is here meant by the will of God? Are we to call it his *sovereign pleasure;* meaning by it any of those secret things which, as they are not revealed, belong to God and not to us? Or are we to call it his *preceptive* will, thereby meaning exclusively what he has revealed? The whole Bible is the revelation of Jehovah's will. It makes known, not merely what he is and what he commands, but what he has promised to do, and the terms on which he will bestow his blessings. The apostle is speaking of prayer, and of the confidence which we may have in God, that he will hear us, if we ask for blessings, and in a manner, according to his revealed will. But if the desired object does not accord with it, we have no promise that meets our case. When James and John made their petition to Christ, "Grant unto us that we may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory," he reproved them, saying, "Ye know not what ye ask." Ye know not the nature of your request, and the consequences of having it granted. Ye ask for what God has not promised to give, and

ye do it also with improper views. Our text then, unlimited as the language seems to be, must evidently mean all things, whatsoever we shall ask, which, in their nature and extent, accord with the system of revealed truth.

3. It is also indispensable to efficacious prayer, *that it be offered in Christ's name;*—in the exercise, not merely of a general belief in his character as the Savior, but of a firm and cordial reliance on his merits and mediation alone for acceptance with God. This we are required to do; and by virtue of his mediatorial office and work, our prayers, unless defective in other respects, will assuredly find acceptance before the throne.

4. In addition to the presupposed or implied qualities just named, acceptable prayer includes *an earnest desire for the blessing*, connected with *a deep sense of dependence on God* for it, *confidence in him* to fulfill his promises, and a *persevering importunity* till the blessing comes.

It includes *an earnest desire* for the blessing. This desire is something more than what is ordinarily felt by the people of God respecting the interests of his kingdom and the salvation of souls. Is a revival of religion the desired blessing? The Christian's mind is now dwelling on the subject. His heart is pained by the surrounding coldness and death. He sees the impenitent in the way to ruin. And he asks with trembling solicitude, Can no relief be found? Is there no help, no hope? He sends up his cries to God: "O Lord, revive thy work." "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." His desire is strong, and earnest, and ardent. His heart is firmly fixed in its purpose. He is thirsting, and panting, and pouring out his soul to God for a blessing.

Both the cause and intenseness of this desire are strikingly presented by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession according to the will of God." Hence it appears that the prayer, which prevails with God, is indited by the Holy Spirit, under whose intercessory influences there are groanings which cannot be uttered. These groanings imply such earnest longings for the blessing as words cannot express.

But with this desire is connected *a deep sense of dependence on God* for it. The praying Christian, though faithful in the discharge of his various duties, and ardently desirous for the salvation of souls, is aware of the current and force of human depravity, of the imminent danger of sinners, and of the utter inefficiency of human efforts to convert men, without the special influence of the Holy Ghost. His language is, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God, for my expectation is from him."

Essential also to prevailing prayer is humble *confidence in God.* This confidence is what our Savior principally meant by the term *believing.* And *what* we are to believe, which is the main point here to be determined, can be ascertained from collateral passages of Scripture. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Faith, in prayer, then, must be exercised in respect both to the *character* and *promises* of God. We must believe that he is just what he has revealed himself to be, the only living and true God, a Being of infinite wisdom and holiness, and that he will cordially accept and abundantly reward all that come to him in the way of his appointment. And what says the apostle James? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Stronger language could not be used to show the indispensable necessity of firm reliance on the truth of God, and on his power and faithfulness to fulfil his promises. In acceptable prayer, then, the Christian takes hold of the divine testimony, believes that God means just what he says, and expects an answer.

True prayer includes also a *persevering importunity* till the blessing comes. This importunity is, in other words, a continued wrestling, believing, hoping, and expecting. It is a continued pleading with God, with an unwillingness to be denied, and with those groanings which cannot be uttered. It is what God requires in prayer, and which at last obtains the blessing.

II. WHY MAY WE EXPECT SUCH PRAYER TO BE ANSWERED?

We may expect it to be answered, because God has recorded in his holy word *various cases* in which it was answered, and has given the most *positive assurance* that he will answer it.

Jacob, feeling his need of a divine blessing, wrestled with the Angel of the covenant, until the breaking of the day. As a prince he had power with God, and with men, and prevailed. He prayed in faith, persevering amid delays, alarms, discouragements, and opposition from every side. So ardent was his desire and so strong his faith, that he held on, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

The Syrophenician woman, in her address to Christ, was humble, pressing, and importunate, beseeching him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. Now mark her earnestness and ardor, in connection with her sense of dependence; "She came and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me." Mark the strength of her faith, expressed in our Savior's reply; "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." She thus persevered in her plea through every discouragement, and prevailed.

Look at the apostles in reference to the great revival on the day of Pentecost. Christ commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but "to wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." And what was it to wait for the Father's promise? It was to continue in prayer, earnestly desiring, confidently expecting, and perseveringly importuning, till the promise was fulfilled in the out-pouring of his Holy Spirit.

These are a few of the many cases in which true prayer, with its marked characteristics, was offered, and the desired blessing obtained. And is there no encouragement, no *deeply interesting* and *heart-cheering* encouragement, to be derived from them? Were they not recorded for the benefit of God's people in subsequent ages?

But our reliance is not merely on examples. We have the most positive *assurance* that God will answer prayers. Said Moses to the Israelites, "What nation is there so great, that hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" The Israelites were the ancient church of God, but they had wandered from him in unbelief. And the object of Moses was, to excite them to return, and to pray in faith for the mercies which they needed, assuring them, that the Lord their God was *ready to bless abundantly*, in all things for which they called upon him.

Notice the language of David in his address to the Most High. "O thou that hearest prayer," "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,

force! Do we make the case our own; the *duty* ours, and ours the privilege? Does the worth of perishing immortals lie with due weight upon our minds, and constrain us to say one to another, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord?" O my brethren; the Church holds a station of tremendous responsibility. God has designed that she should show forth his praise and exert a powerful influence on impenitent men. She *may* do much—she is *commanded* to do much—in calling down the influences of the Holy Ghost. How criminal then her negligence and unbelief! Negligence when everlasting consequences are depending! unbelief when God has promised to bless! Actuated by the same spirit which brought a Redeemer from the skies, we should pour out our sighs and tears, as he did his precious blood, for a ruined world; and labor faithfully unto death, if we hope to receive a crown of life. No license and no encouragement is given to inactivity and unbelief.

And now, Christian brethren, what are you expecting? Are you looking out to see a great moving among sinners, anxious for their immortal interests? Do you expect to see them fleeing to Christ as for their lives? Are you praying for the Holy Spirit to be poured out, that their consciences may be effectually aroused, and they be constrained to repair to the cross for pardon and peace? When you see your neighbors or friends sinking under the pressure of disease, and drawing near to death, without hope, and with but a few moments left in which to prepare for eternity—do you feel the importance of prayer and effort? And have you no pity for the impenitent, while in health, who are abusing all the means of grace? Do you not regret that you have already let so many opportunities of doing good pass unimproved? Or were *you* laid upon the bed of death, could you help feeling for those that have no interest in the Savior? Then let the subject come home upon your minds *now*, while in health and while you have all the encouragement to prayer and effort which the promises of God can furnish. O be entreated, by all that is sacred and solemn in the work of redemption, to rise up to a nobler stand for God, and to more efficient exertions for your dying fellow men. Go speedily and plead for sinners, and for Zion's prosperity, as though standing near the cross of Calvary, near the throne of God, or near the judgment seat, and in full view of eternal realities.

Brethren, the time is short—the night is at hand. Work while it is day—praying always with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance; for blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing.—AMEN.

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SERMON CLXVII.

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CONSEQUENCES OF INTEMPERANCE IN EATING.

[Continued from page 360.]

Proverbs xxiii. 2. *Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.*

This is Solomon's direction to one who is tempted to indulge in eating to excess. And it means, either that a man in such circumstances, should feel as if a knife were at his throat, to give him a mortal wound if he yielded to the temptation; or, that it would be better for him to put a knife to his throat, than to indulge his appetite immoderately. Understood either way, it forcibly represents *the dangerous consequences of excess in diet.* To exhibit these consequences, is my object in this discourse.

1. Let us consider the effects of this kind of excess *on the physical character.*

The peculiar influence of alcoholic mixtures, whether ardent spirit, or wine, it is not my design to depict: but merely the effects of those articles, whether fluid or solid, that are commonly taken for nourishment.

There are two articles of drink, viz. tea and coffee, so extensively used, and regarded as affording nourishment, that a few words seem necessary concerning them: though I intend not here a full discussion as to their use. But the true nature of their operation on the system ought to be understood. And there is no longer any intelligent physician, or chimist, who maintains, that, apart from the substances with which they are mixed when taken, there is derived from them the least nourishment. They operate precisely like alcohol, (except that they do not intoxicate,) by stimulating the nervous system; and thus rouse into action the strength of the constitution: but they impart to it no new strength. Hence it is, that those addicted to their use, are apt to resort to them with greater frequency, and to make the decoction stronger and stronger, just as is the case with those who habitually employ alcohol. Hence too it is, that the feeble and nervous are affected by their use with tremors, palpitations of the heart, and a frequent sense of sinking and debility, after their excitement is over. Hence too, the frequent headache of such persons, which, for a time, is relieved by a free use of the sub-

stances that produced it, in the same manner as the horrid prostration of the intemperate man is relieved by a resort to the stimulating bowl, which will once more rouse up his energies only to sink still lower. Hence too, the sleeplessness, at night, and the stupor and heaviness that oppress the system in the morning, until a repetition of the use arouses the organs to new efforts.

That these substances exert a salutary influence, occasionally as medicines, cannot be doubted. But it is no less certain, that their habitual use produces, in most constitutions, in a greater or less degree, the effects that have been mentioned. Hence a distinguished French physician says, that they should be used *only in those circumstances, when it is proper to use fermented or distilled liquors.* Yet how wide spread and enormous their use! During the year 1831, more than *three hundred million* pounds of coffee were consumed in Europe and America; and *fifty millions* in the United States: and as many pounds of tea among us, as we have inhabitants. Surely their effects cannot be small, either upon the health, or the pecuniary resources of the community. And if water be a decidedly better beverage, the inquiry certainly deserves the serious attention of every man, and especially of every Christian, whether both worldly and religious motives do not demand an abandonment of these luxuries.

But to dwell no longer on a point that will probably be so unwelcome to most of the community, I proceed to point out the physical effects of excess in the use of articles really nourishing, when used temperately.

This excess produces sometimes grossness of appearance and obesity, and sometimes a haggard aspect and an emaciation of the frame. Fleshiness and a gross countenance are commonly regarded as resulting from excess, either in eating or drinking; and in most cases this is a correct inference. But very few are aware, of what is probably true, that the most usual effect of over-eating is excessive leanness and a pale squalid aspect. The digestive organs, being overloaded, are unable to convert any part of the food they receive into healthy nourishment: the consequence is, that the body is famished, not through a deficiency, but by an excess of food. In other constitutions, the superabundance is converted into fat; which must be regarded, generally, as a secretion more or less of a morbid character.

That this is a true view of the subject, fair experiments will show. Let the too fleshy man reduce the quantity, and simplify the quality of his food, and employ a proper proportion of exercise, and he will soon be reduced to a healthy standard. And let the emaciated man who has no actual disease upon him, do the same; and when he takes only that quantity and quality of food which his digestive organs can master with pleasure, he will generally find his muscles attaining gradually the strength and fullness of health. This is, indeed, directly contrary to the course that is usually taken: but it is nevertheless the course which medical philosophy and experience point out. A man becomes emaciated and feeble, and the conclusion he and his friends naturally draw, is, that he needs only a greater quantity, or more nourishing quality of food, to restore him; whereas what he needs is to give rest to his digestive organs, that they may gain strength to convert food into nourishment. And this rest can be obtained only by reducing the daily task imposed upon them.

Another physical effect of excessive eating, is *muscular torpidity.*— This is exemplified in that indisposition to exertion, and tendency to sleep, which every man feels after a very hearty meal. The slightest effort seems an insupportable burthen: every thing, indeed, except sleep, is burdensome. The reason of this torpidity I have explained in a former discourse.— The muscles, the senses, and the brain, must in a greater or less degree,

suspend their proper work, in order that the energies of the system may be concentrated in the stomach. This is the reason that many are in the habit of defering the principal meal of the day till their active efforts are over; for they have found, that after dinner it is no easy matter to bring the voluntary muscles into action; and multitudes suppose this sluggish state of the system is the necessary result of taking food, and have no idea that when only a temperate quantity of food is taken, the system is refreshed and invigorated, instead of being oppressed; and that it is *excess* only that is succeeded by torpidity. True, a man may be so much fatigued before dinner that nature will demand repose: or his drowsiness may result from a feeble state of health; but with these exceptions, the torpidity subsequent to meals, is to be imputed to criminal excess.

It often happens, that while the muscles are thus rendered inactive by their sympathy with the digestive powers, the nervous system is unduly excited. Hence the uneasiness that often follows a too hearty meal; and hence too, the extreme irritability and crabbedness of the glutton, when not buried in sleep, or "feeding himself without fear" at the table of luxury.

It is natural to infer, that if the digestive powers have a severer task imposed upon them than nature intended, they will only imperfectly execute their office. The consequence must be, a greater or less derangement of the system; since imperfect blood must produce imperfect nourishment. Thus the way is prepared for disease; or rather, this is sowing the seeds of disease, which, in such a soil, will soon spring up, and flourish in rank luxuriance. The common opinions as to the origin of diseases are exceedingly incorrect. When attacked by severe and violent disorders, it is rare that any one thinks of looking farther than to the slight exposure or fatigue that *developed* the complaint, but was by no means its cause. The fact is, the constitution in most cases is a long while preparing for sickness before it comes; and in a majority of instances, that preparation consists, either in unnecessary expenses of vital energy, or in intemperance in drink or food; and in such cases, certainly the cause is sinful, so that sometimes, a man who dies with a fever, or the apoplexy, may be as criminal as he who terminates his days by the pistol. All feel this to be true in the case of the drunkard. But why is it not equally true of him, who through excess in food, prepares his system to be invaded and overcome by disease?

When a man overloads his digestive powers, every part of the system sympathises with them, and lends a helping hand to sustain the burden.—All those organs that serve as waste gates to the bodily frame are immediately roused to most vigorous action, and endeavor to throw off the superabundance before it has corrupted the system. For a time the object is in a good measure accomplished. But wearied out ere long by incessant labor, they fail to accomplish their object, and soon disease is able to fix its talons in the constitution. The man brought suddenly upon a sick bed, racks his invention to assign some cause for his complaint, that will exonerate himself from blame; and he feels perfectly satisfied, if he can recollect having taken a cold, or having been necessitated to perform some extra labor. Whereas, had he been temperate, that extra labor would not probably have injured him, nor a slight atmospheric vicissitude have resulted in a catarrh or cold. His intemperance has exhausted the powers of life, and the vitiated blood can no longer be purified by their action. The intelligent physician often sees in the flushed countenance and fleshiness of one man, and in the paleness and emaciation of another, the marks of incipient disease. But the individual himself, borne up by the over excitement of stimulating food, fancies himself secure from disease *until suddenly prostrated.*

Lest I should seem to be exaggerating the effects of excess in eating in producing disease, I will fortify my statements by the opinion of several distinguished physicians.

"Gluttony and intemperance," says one, "are the source of two thirds of the diseases which embitter the life of man."

"The due degree of temperance," says another, "would add one third to the duration of human life."

"I tell you honestly," says a third, "what I think is the cause of the complicated maladies of the human race: it is their gormandizing, and stuffing and stimulating their digestive organs to an excess, thereby producing nervous disorders and irritation."

"It is the opinion of the majority of the most distinguished physicians," says a fourth, "that intemperance in diet, destroys the bulk of mankind: in other words, that what is eaten and drank, and thus taken into the habit, is the original cause of by far the greater number of diseases which afflict the human race."

"Most of all the chronical diseases, the infirmities of old age, and the short period of the lives of Englishmen," said another, more than a century since, "are owing to repletion."

Says another, "What occasions *two thirds* of all inflammatory and febrile diseases, but causes, in themselves not serious, operating upon a system highly susceptible of diseased action, from being overcharged with stimulating and nutritious matter? All our most eminent physicians agree in this one point, that as a people, we eat far too much hearty food; that is, we take in more rich nutriment than we require, and the consequence is, our system becomes overloaded and oppressed—our organs are clogged in the performance of their several functions—the circulating fluids become too thick and stimulating, and the proneness to derangement and diseased action, is greatly increased. Hence arises a large proportion of the inflammatory and febrile diseases amongst us, and hence it is, that copious blood letting and active medicines are so much more required in America than in most other countries."

Will not these appalling testimonies startle those Christians, who, by their excesses are taking the very course which is here marked out, as the road to premature disease and death? Will they still continue to regard the intemperate drinker as the only man who is violating the command, *Thou shalt not kill?* In view of such results from the daily violation of the rules of temperance in eating, can he go on as he has done, with his conscience asleep? Can he thus cut short his days, and not be guilty? For it ought further to be remembered, that excess in food, not merely pre-disposes to disease, but weakens the power of the system to resist disease. Hence the temperate man will rise unhurt from an attack which will crush the glutton at once. For the latter has tasked his bodily organs so severely, that they cannot sustain a conflict with disease. This is admitted universally in the case of the drunkard. But it is equally true in respect to that man who is intemperate in food. And if his constiution give way thirty or forty years earlier, in consequence of that intemperance, why is he less guilty than the drunkard, for the self-immolation?

II. I proceed next to consider the effects of intemperance in eating *upon the mental character.*

The bodily torpor, already described as the result of excess, cannot exist without imparting a corresponding stupidity to the mind. In other words, the load that paralyses the bodily powers must prostrate the intellect *and* cramp all its energies. Let a man attempt vigorously to exercise his *mind after* a hearty meal, and he will have a good idea of the effects of *excess upon* the intellect. He cannot confine the attention, nor depend

upon the memory, nor rouse the imagination, nor trust the judgment. What though he direct his eye to the pages of science, or even to the lighter pages of literature; a heavy fog impedes his vision, and a leaden weight hangs upon the intellectual wheels and springs. In short, his mental powers are too obtuse to discern, and too lethargic to act. The only alternative is to let them rest until the corporeal system is relieved of its task. This is in fact the course that is generally taken. And in this way an immense amount of time is lost, and that too without any compunctions of conscience; because men generally do not know that the indisposition to mental exertion which they feel is the result of excessive indulgence of the appetite. Multitudes of literary men at the present day, who suppose themselves as diligent in study and in bodily effort as is consistent with health, are in the habit of losing almost entirely their afternoons, and of giving them up to sleep, or lethargy, or idle sauntering about. After dinner they are really incapable of bodily or mental effort, because they have indulged themselves too freely at the table. Some in such circumstances resort to the stimulus of tea, or coffee, or even wine. But the forced mental operations that succeed are unnatural and inefficient: and in the end no time is gained, because the prostration subsequent to such excitement is great and long continued. Nothing, indeed, but universal temperance can give a uniform and unsophisticated energy to the mind. Every student knows something of the nature of this energy, if he has ever sat down to his books in the morning, after a refreshing night's sleep and a light breakfast. His system is then free from the irritation and oppression of dietetic excesses: and such a state essentially may be continued through the day by the practice of strict temperance; for it is as true of the universally temperate man as of the vegetable feeder—that "with him it is morning all the day long."

I appeal then to the individual who thus almost habitually loses his afternoons, and inquire of him, what account he expects to render to God for so much time wasted by the unnecessary indulgence of the appetite? Especially do I inquire of the minister of Christ, upon whose time at the present day there is an almost constant demand, how he expects to meet with composure in judgment those whom he has so often warned against the waste of their precious time? *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

III. In the third place, let us consider the effects of excess in eating, *upon the moral and religious character.*

Most men suppose that the slight pain, or uneasiness, or drowsiness, that succeeds a too hearty meal, is the whole of the effect which such excess produces. When a man finds himself, some hours or even days after the indulgence, excited in his temper on the slightest provocation, fretful and impatient of contradiction, and betrayed into severity or retaliation unworthy the character of a Christian or a man, little is he aware that a more careful attention to the kind and quantity of his food might have armed him against the temptations that overcame him, and enabled him to have kept his temper even under the grossest insults. But he has only to put in practice the rules of temperance, suggested in a preceding discourse, to be satisfied that *one principal cause of a fretful temper*, and a disposition easily to be excited and exasperated, and an impatience of contradiction, lies in his intemperate habits at the table. Indeed, he will become satisfied that the essence of his sin lies more in the cause, which is excess in eating, than in its almost unavoidable result, an irritable temper.

Many men are in the habit of living almost continually in a feverish state of feeling, disposed to murmur at almost every occurrence, and very rarely to be in a state calm enough for prayer, or any other religious du-

ty. Now in many instances this ruffled state of mind is kept up by the irritation of the nervous system occasioned by overloading the digestive powers. The temperate man alone can exhibit the temper of a philosopher and the calmness of the Christian. Just in proportion to a man's intemperance in any respect, will be the violence and irregularity of his passions. He may impute their ravages to peculiarity of constitution; but most probably, in nearly every case, *God imputes it to some criminal indulgence.* It is high time that Christians had learnt to practice universal temperance before they charge an irritable temper or ferocious passions upon nature.

Another frequent attendant upon excess in eating is *gloom and melancholy.* The individual finds his spirits sinking without any apparent cause, and gloomy forebodings preying upon his mind. Hope, that once buoyed him up with elastic wing, now sinks under the heavy load of melancholy, and almost ceases to breathe. A lowering cloud encircles the horizon and gradually spreads over the whole heavens. A settled despondency and listless inaction not unfrequently come on, interrupted only by occasional seasons of abstinence or temperance. Although the man feels as if he could readily part with every earthly possession if he could recover his former cheerfulness, yet he never once suspects that the reduction of a few ounces of food at each meal would effectually remove the incubus from his soul.

"The great majority of those complaints which are considered purely mental," says Dr. James Johnson, Physician extraordinary to the King of England, "such as irritability and irascibility of temper, gloomy melancholy, timidity and irresolution, despondency, &c. might be speedily remedied and entirely removed by a rigid system of abstinence, and a very little medicine."

Fatal as is this gloomy state of mind to success in worldly pursuits, its most lamentable influence is exerted upon the religious character. The individual had long perhaps thought himself created anew in Christ Jesus, and indulged the hope of being an heir to the eternal inheritance. But he loses all confidence and almost all hope of final acceptance: and his thoughts brood with terrible self-application upon all that is terrific to the unconverted sinner and the formal professor. In vain is he pointed to the divine promises, or exhorted to meditate upon the richness and freeness of grace as exhibited through a Savior. But let him for a few weeks give up his rich and stimulating diet, and partake only of the plainest fare, and that in the smallest quantity which will sustain life and health, and he will find the cloud gradually withdrawing, and the Sun of Righteousness rising again with healing in his wings. Even when his abstemiousness is carried so far as to weaken, in some measure, his bodily energies, he will find that his mind will gather strength and be filled again with the peace of God that passeth understanding.

Pomponius Atticus, the friend of Cicero, under the influence of that melancholy which so often accompanies a disordered state of the stomach, had resolved to destroy himself: but being persuaded to accomplish his purpose by starvation, taking only a little water from time to time to alleviate his anguish, the abstinence of a few days cured his melancholy, and he readily abandoned his purpose of suicide, and actually lived to an advanced age. By abstinence or temperance may religious melancholy also, in a great many instances, be cured. Indeed I have little doubt that a majority of the cases of feeble hope and desponding faith that exist at the present day, in those manifestly pious, are produced by *excess in* eating. The daily habit of taking into the system even a few *ounces more of food* than the organs can well manage, is sufficient to keep *the spirits continually* depressed; and to convert a once vigorous, active,

cheerful Christian, into a desponding, irresolute, inefficient slave. Could such men be persuaded to try the effect of uniform and strict temperance, they would find such a relief as would guard them effectually against future indulgence. But they are usually the very last persons to be persuaded that they are intemperate, or that such simple means will work so powerful a cure.

Excess operates injuriously upon the religious character in another way. It produces an *irregularity* in all the feelings and affections good and bad: now raising them to a high pitch of excitement, and then occasioning them to sink so low that no call can arouse them. Now how can a man judge correctly respecting his Christian character, while under the influence of such irregular emotions? He soon finds that his religious feelings are in a great measure dependent upon the state of his bodily health; and when they seem to be such as Christian experience requires, how can he tell whether they are the result of religious principle or of disordered nerves? And when nothing will excite them, may not the cause be an exhausted state of the system from excess in food?

O, what Christian, who knows any thing of the value of a bright and steady hope of heaven, and of uniform and consistent religious feelings, will consent to give up these blessings for the sake of unnecessary indulgence of morbid appetite! Can he be a Christian who will do it? He cannot certainly be an eminent Christian. Indeed, we may set it down as a universal fact, that no great eater can be a very consistent, or amiable, or happy man. He is under the dominion of one of the grossest of the animal appetites; and until he can learn to mortify this and deny himself unnecessary and forbidden gratification, he must be content to live destitute of the pure and holy joys which are the reward of temperance and devoted piety.

Individuals who suffer from religious melancholy usually expect and receive much sympathy from their Christian brethren and from Christian ministers, on the ground that it is their misfortune rather than their sin. But before we tender them our sympathies, we ought to inquire into their dietetic habits—we ought to dine with them once, and see whether the cause of their despondency does not lie in unreasonable indulgence. If so, strict temperance may cure them: and if they will not adopt this remedy, they ought rather to be reproved, and warned of their guilt and danger, than pitied for their calamity.

IV. In the fourth place let us glance at the effects of excess in eating *upon the domestic character.*

Religion, predominating in the family circle, is generally and justly regarded as rendering that the happiest spot on earth. But just in proportion as intemperance of any kind prevails there, will that happiness be neutralized. Children, fed upon rich and stimulating food, will become sickly and peevish; and instead of exhibiting those innocent and playful feelings that render them such interesting objects in a family scene, they will convert it into a Bedlam Parents and domestics will have enough to do to manage their unruly tempers and to nurse their sickly constitutions. Especially will this be the case, if those parents have indulged themselves as well as their children in luxurious living: for then their own tempers will be irritable, their feelings irregular, and their patience easily exhausted. To-day, they will break forth upon their disobedient offspring with violent and needless severity. To-morrow, through mere irresolution, they will suffer their authority to be trampled upon. That same irresolution and the despondency that often accompanies it, will render them unfaithful in giving religious instruction to their children, and dispose them to be so reserved and cold in their intercourse with *their little ones*, as will send a chill and alienation through their hearts.

The same cause will prevent between husbands and wives that cheerful and constant attention to one another's wants, and that sociable disposition so essential to mutual happiness; and a cold, unlovely manner will most probably be substituted, which will prove a poison to domestic enjoyment. No family circle can be truly happy where cheerfulness and a mutual disposition to please and be pleased do not exist. But there is not a greater enemy to such a state of feeling than excess in food. So that he who daily loads the table of his family with every dainty for the palate—even when real love to his family is the motive—may be sure that he is throwing an apple of discord and petulance into fallen man's only remaining paradise. Would he preserve the happiness of that Paradise, let him by precept and example, strive to make it the abode of universal temperance.

V. In the fifth place, let us consider the effects of excess in eating, upon the *social character*.

We have only to suppose a community generally devoted to the indulgence of the palate, and then inquire, how the physical, intellectual and moral effects of the excesses that have been pointed out in the case of an individual, affect the social condition. The individuals of such a community will be subject to the physical and mental torpor and imbecility which are the inevitable concomitants of over-eating. Such then will be the predominant character of the community. Feeble health and the want of power to sustain hardship and fatigue, will result in an effeminacy which always marks a sinking state of society. Few, if any, bright examples of active and powerful intellect will be seen, where intellect is cramped by an overloaded corporeal system. Wherever excitement exists it will be violent and irregular; because the sensibilities of every luxurious man are rendered morbid; and because, too, his passions and feelings are subject to sudden and great alternations. Are the individuals in society feverish and fretful in their tempers? How can frequent and painful collisions and alienations be avoided, when they come in contact? Are they melancholy and jealous, as great eaters frequently are? Then will deep-rooted enmity and hatred spring up in their bosoms against their neighbors, and society will be convulsed by their discord.

Late hours are an almost inevitable attendant upon dietetic excesses.—A too hearty dinner produces an almost unconquerable tendency to sleep; and an afternoon nap is followed by wakefulness during the first part of the night. This is usually increased by the stimulus of tea, coffee, wine, or spirits. These, by creating an artificial appetite, are almost sure to be an occasion of hearty and late suppers. The final consequence will be, that the individual who takes such a course of living will sleep in the morning rather than at night. Of course, breakfast will be late, and therefo re dinner must be so too. In this way is the whole system of late hours introduced, particularly among the wealthy, who suffer most from luxurious living. And it having become fashionable to be late, the contagion will be more or less communicated to other classes, until the whole community is infected. Now I hesitate not to say, that, almost without an exception, the man whose habits are such as above described, cannot be a very industrious man; for he loses in sleep the hours of the morning; one of which is more valuable, for physical or intellectual labor, than two at any other time of the day. Most injurious, therefore, upon the industry of society, will be the effect of excess in eating. And if individuals are found, who are really industrious, notwithstanding their hearty dinners and late hours, yet they do a violence to their constitutions which will be followed by premature prostration and *decay*.

While the industrious habits of society are thus more or less para-

lyzed, the same cause excites to extravagant expenditures. As the appetite becomes more fastidious and epicurean, the richness and variety of entertainments must be increased. Envy, pride, and unholy emulation, lend their influence in stimulating families to attempt excelling one another in the richness and variety of their entertainments. Nor is it in food and drink only that there is a strife for the mastery. For excess in diet infallibly leads to extravagance in dress, furniture, and equipage. Even the poor emulate the rich in these costly exhibitions, if admitted to their society; or if not, excessive extravagance among the wealthy, stimulates other classes to like extravagance, so far as is in their power. And thus it happens, that multitudes, who live far beyond their income, fancy themselves very economical and temperate, because their table is less luxuriously loaded, and their equipage less splendid than that of some rich neighbor; when in fact, their extravagance may be far greater, and more criminal than their neighbor's, because he is guilty of spending only the surplus of his income, while they are reducing themselves to poverty.

In no country in the world is it so easy for all classes of society to obtain the means of living independently and comfortably as in this.—Yet what complaining of the hardness of the times, and the stagnation of business do we hear on every side; and what a large proportion of our citizens are so encumbered by debt as to be perpetually tormented while alive, and to leave their property insolvent! Whence is this but from the excesses and extravagancies that have been mentioned? They spend vastly more for food and drink, and for equalling their neighbors in dress and equipage, than necessity or happiness demands. And yet, intelligent as our citizens are; nay, Christians, as many of them are, they scarcely suspect that they exceed at all the bounds of temperance or of economy, and really suppose that their pecuniary embarrassments result from no fault of theirs. But the truth is, the chief source of bankruptcy among the rich, and of straitened circumstances among the poorer classes of the community, lies in some species of intemperance or extravagance in living. And it always will be so, until men shall learn, better than they now understand, in what intemperance and extravagance consist.

A necessary result of luxurious living, is a contemptible effeminacy of character in one sex, and a pitiable nervous frailty in the other. Hence, communities given for a long time to excess and extravagance, swarm with so many young men, who exhibit all the softness of the female character, without any of its virtues; whose days are devoted to trifling decorations and accomplishments; whose sensibilities are exhausted upon trifles, and whose physical and intellectual features are personified imbecility. Hence too, in the same communities, are found so many females, who, in the language of scripture, "*would not adventure to set the sole of their foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness.*" Their physical constitutions are deeply impressed with the marks of frailty, imperfect development, and disproportionate culture: and how can their minds but resemble the fragile and weak tenement in which they are imprisoned? A sensibility, painfully acute, is their most striking characteristic; unfitting them for the trying duties that devolve upon wives and mothers; and indeed, they are little better calculated for usefulness than the porcelain ornaments of the rich man's parlor.

Now, with such effeminacy in the fathers, and ridiculous weakness in the mothers, what will be the character of their progeny? In a few generations how deteriorated and contemptible! Indeed, it requires but two or three generations absolutely to run out a family that gives itself up to *luxurious indulgence.* Born destitute of stamina, in the physical con-

stitution, and alike puny in intellect, and pampered in the cradle of luxury, the descendants have not the power to retain even the pecuniary consequence, much less the character of their progenitors; and often the very name ceases among men. Some temperate and industrious individual, from an obscure condition, gradually comes into possession of their wealth, and in turn his descendants give up the reins to self-indulgence, and take the same downward course, and are soon buried in the same oblivious gulf.

"Oh Luxury! the eldest born of wealth,
Thou foe to virtue, and thou bane of health;
Insidious nursling in the lap of ease,
Whose breath is pestilence, whose smile disease,
May suffering man yet see thee as thou art,
A greedy vampire, feasting on his heart!"

VI. In the sixth place, let us consider the effects of epicurean indulgence *upon the national character.*

Physical energy—so greatly is mind dependant upon matter—lies at the foundation of a nation's success and glory. But epicurean excesses impair, and finally crush it. How little of clear-sighted, effective legislation, and of promptness and decision in time of peril, and of even-handed justice following close upon the heels of crime, can we expect, when rulers and magistrates are frequently found at the table of luxury oppressing and benumbing all their intellectual and moral energies! Nor can a nation expect that her sailors and soldiers will escape the withering influence, when the example of indulgence is set by legislators, judges, and the respectable portion of the citizens. More than one Hannibal, who had conquered the snows of the Alps, and the sword of his enemy, has been subdued by the luxuries of Capua.

Nor let a nation imagine that a resolute and pervading spirit of enterprise can long coexist with luxurious indulgence. The men who line their country's coasts with forests of masts, who build up at frequent intervals the busy and the mighty city, and who, in their commercial enterprises, traverse every ocean and clime, now braving the billows and the ice-bergs of arctic and antarctic seas, and now the heats and pestilence of the torrid zone, are never trained for their work at the table of luxury. And just in proportion as dietetic excesses prevail, will such hardy enterprises diminish. So in every other art and pursuit demanding vigor and noble daring, the arm of industry will be palsied, and those arts only flourish that minister to effeminacy and luxury.

Well were it for a nation if the deteriorating process stopped here. But that apple of a nation's eye, its morality, soon feels its inroads; and its quick-sighted consciousness of pollution becomes dimmed. The obtuseness which excess produces in the individual brain, is communicated by an infallible sympathy to the national conscience and heart. The abandoned and the profligate fear not to outrage more and more the moral sense of the community, because they see that the eagle eye and inflexible lion heart of virtue have departed. And yet, so gradual and smooth is this downward progress, that rarely is warning given or taken, till the giddy whirlpool is too far entered to return.

But this brightest jewel in a nation's crown cannot thus be plucked out without other glories falling into the plunderer's hand. Republican simplicity of manners, and republican equality of condition, are soon forced to flee from so uncongenial a soil; while customs and habits most unnatural and disgusting to the pure taste of temperance, come in like a flood; sweeping away every resting place of freedom, and raising up a

haughty aristocracy to lord it over a prostrate multitude, made too imbecile, physically, intellectually, and morally, by aping the luxury and extravagance of their oppressors, to be able to resist them.

It is indeed true, that intemperance in diet is never the sole cause of this dreadful prostration of a nation's glories. Other marauders are always in company with this, to make sure the destruction and to share the spoil. But this is one of the leaders and pioneers in the accursed work; and if successfully resisted, none of the ruthless banditti that follow in the train, will be able to maintain their ground.

VII. Finally, let us consider the effects of dietetic excesses *upon the cause of benevolence.*

In such an artificial state of society as exists in most civilized nations, when luxury and extravagance have imparted to the animal appetites a most unnatural and ravenous strength, very few persons, not even professed Christians, are aware how few and simple are the real wants of nature. They have no idea with how cheap a fare she can, not only be satisfied, but made abundantly happy. Hence many good men have come to regard even a very criminal excess and extravagance in living as necessary to the health, strength, and well-being of the human system. Hence too, they can form no just estimate of the great amount of pecuniary saving which the really temperate man is able to make. To state that most families might easily in this way reduce the expenses of living by a third, or half, would seem most unreasonably extravagant; yet I doubt not but even this is a calculation that will be found far below the actual experiment in millenial times. For it is not merely the saving in the article of food that is to be taken into the account. Good as well as bad habits always cluster together: and when men become really temperate, they are led naturally and easily to cast off their needless extravagancies of dress, furniture and equipage. Thus will a man ere long extricate himself from many vortexes of expenditure quite as large, deep and rapid, as that which revolves and roars around the table of luxury. Nor is this all. For, strict temperance in diet will give the physical ability and the mental inclination for a more untiring, active and efficient industry, whereby the pecuniary means will be greatly enlarged. A man who will faithfully adopt such retrenchments, and practice such industry, will be astonished and delighted to find how God will bless him in his basket and his store; and how wonderfully he can swell his contributions to the cause of benevolence. His hundreds now will cost him less of effort and sacrifice—I had almost said than his stinted tens before. Oh that Christians would learn to taste the joy of acting upon this millenial standard!

Pecuniary contribution, however, is not the greatest and most important offering which we are required to make to the cause of benevolence. There is the consecration of one's self, body, soul, and spirit, *a living sacrifice*, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. We are to hold ourselves ready to go wherever he shall call us, and to do and suffer whatever he shall lay upon us, for promoting the temporal and eternal happiness of our fellow men. But how can he whose pampered appetite loathes the simple fare of temperance, and who is wedded in his attachment to rich and stimulating food, how can he accompany the devoted Moravian amid the eternal snows of the frigid zone, or be content to follow the Arab over the burning sands of the desert? No, these are services which he will leave for the disciples of temperance to perform; and persuade himself that his constitution is too delicate, and his prospect of usefulness too bright in civilized society, to permit him to leave the land of his father's: whereas, it may be, that his luxurious *habits alone* have crippled his physical energies, and rendered stagnant

the current of benevolence that should flow, warm and rapid, through every Christian's bosom; and therefore, God will not accept his apology for holding back from the missionary work.

Christian brother, or sister, whose eye may fall on these pages, are you to be reckoned in respect to your dietetic habits, among the temperate or the intemperate? Are you daily giving up the reins to appetite, so as to bring oppression upon your bodily powers, stupor upon your intellect, and apathy upon your heart? Are you thus, for the sake of pampering and gratifying mere animal nature, planting in your body the seeds of disease, and shortening your earthly career, too short at best? Are you thus polluting and destroying that body which is consecrated by your profession to be a temple of the Holy Ghost? And especially, can you thus treat the immortal spirit that animates this body: cramping and clouding the range of its exercises—rendering your disposition irritable and unlovely—fostering gloomy and corroding passions, and spreading doubt and despondency over your prospects for eternity? Oh, this is a dreadful tax for a Christian to pay to a tyrant so vile as intemperance!

Christian parents! are you bringing up your families on the principles of the strictest temperance, or are you suffering your children to make a god of their belly, and by rich and stimulating food to render their bodies sickly, their minds feeble, and their tempers crabbed? Oh, save them from the grasp of the remorseless tyrant, dyspepsy, and the community from the curse of a puny and useless progeny, and yourselves from bitter disappointment and anguish!

Christian citizen and fellow countryman, what is the testimony in respect to temperance in living which your table presents? Does the simplicity of patriarchal times and of our pilgrim fathers adorn it, or does modern extravagance load it down? Nobly take your stand, I beseech you, against the flood of luxury and excess that is rapidly spreading over us and paralysing the energies of our social and national character, consuming, worse than uselessly, our wealth, sowing in the community the poisonous seeds of envy and jealousy—prostrating the spirit of enterprise—lowering rapidly the standard of morality—and fostering that effeminacy and weakness of character, which invite the restless and ambitious to assail and destroy our liberties.

Christian philanthropist! lover of mankind! do you prefer the luxuries of the table to the luxury of doing good? Shall sordid appetite or slavery to general custom, be permitted to dry up the sources and stint the means of beneficence? Oh, at this day, when the cry for help, from so many lands waxes louder and louder, almost with a deafening emphasis, and when so many new fields for benevolent enterprise are showing their drought and desolation, every remaining clasp of selfishness should be unlocked from the Christian's heart; and through every avenue which industry, economy and self-denial can make, should the warm current of benevolence gush forth, full, and clear, and strong, for the conversion of the world.

(The subject to be continued.)

END OF VOL. VIII.